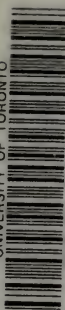


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CARNELL'S FOLLY

JOHN T. FROWBRIDGE







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FARNELL'S FOLLY

BY

J. T. TROWBRIDGE



BOSTON

LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS

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1885



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FARNELL'S FOLLY.

CHAPTER I.

WARD FARNELL IS NOT WELL, AND WHY.

WARD FARNELL, the merchant of Waybrook, had been closeted half the afternoon with his head clerk and a stranger from Buffalo, when at five o'clock he came out of his counting-room, looking so changed, so old and so ghastly, that the boys in the store ceased their jokes, and the gravest among them stepped forward with a countenance full of anxious sympathy.

"Can I do anything for you, Mr. Farnell?" he asked.

"No, thank you, William. I am going home. I am not well."

"But, Mr. Farnell, you have n't your overcoat!"

"Ah! have n't I? you are very kind."

Waiting for his coat, the merchant grasped feebly at the counter behind him, and leaned unsteadily, with his hat set in a sort of drunken way on his broad, grizzled head. The young man brought the garment and guided the struggling arms into it, smoothing it over the shoulders with needless solicitude, as if his very hands would show the kindness of his heart.

"Thank you, William. You were always one of my best boys. I suppose you know what has happened? I am a ruined man, a ruined man!"

"I hope it is not so bad as that!" said William.

"It is worse than I can tell! worse than I can tell!" said Ward Farnell, with piteous iteration. "Everything is swept from under me." His shaking hands fumbled aimlessly with the buttons of his coat. "I must go home and break it — if I can — to Julia."

Shocked as he was to hear of the financial disaster, William was still more disturbed to see the dignity of the man so shaken to pieces by it.

"Let me go first and prepare her," he proposed, in the kindest tones.

Ward Farnell hesitated, pulling his gloves off and on. Perhaps he remembered that never clerk of his had been asked to enter his house in any other capacity than that of a subordinate who knew his place. And now should this one — the best of all his "boys," yet never quite good enough to associate on equal terms with his family — be commissioned to inform the proud Julia that she was the child of a bankrupt and a beggar?

Ward Farnell got his buttons and gloves right at last, straightened himself, adjusted his hat at a somewhat less questionable angle, and answered with recovered dignity, —

"I have been unfortunate, but not base; not base, William. I will break it to her myself. But if you please, you may go up to the new house and tell the workmen there that — that it has passed out of my hands. I suppose they ought to know."

It was his extravagance in building for the world's admiration which had embarrassed him in a season of hard times and precipitated his ruin. This everybody knew, or would soon know; and henceforth the great house, which was to have been a witness to his prosperity, would stand a melancholy monument of his failure. William felt his own heart sink in sympathy with the humiliation of the man as he took from him this message.

"I will tell them," he said. "But let me get the carriage for you first; you ought not to walk home."

"I must learn to walk now," Mr. Farnell replied, with pathetic consideration for his altered state. And gathering up with decency the remnants of his manhood, he departed from the place where he had reigned so long, but which was to know him no more.

William watched the thick-set, heavy figure, jogging slowly down the street and over the bridge; then, turning to get his hat, met Mr. Emmons, the head clerk.

"Well, Will," said that gentleman, cheerfully, "the old order of things has passed away, and a new and better order is to be established. This is Mr. Daskill, of Goldfinch & Co., Mr. Farnell's principal creditors. William Rayburn, Mr. Daskill."

"Yes, William (how are ye?" said Mr. Daskill, in a parenthesis, giving two fingers); "a more satisfactory condition of things. I return to Buffalo in the morning; but I shall run over here again in a few days, and see to matters. Meantime, I have conferred on Mr. Emmons full authority."

Without waiting for a reply, the man who talked of conferring authority with the air of one accustomed to dealing in that familiar commodity, drew the head clerk aside, and proceeded to give him parting instructions, the attentive Emmons assenting and smirking obsequiously. It angered William to see Ward Farnell and his misfortunes passed over so lightly by these two men putting their heads together, and tossing on his hat, he walked discontentedly out of the store.

The November evening, with its chill air and overcast sky, threatening snow, had settled down so early, that people who met and recognized the well-known stocky figure of the village merchant on his way home, did not notice the despair in his face. A cheery little man trudging along the street, with a wood-saw under one arm and a saw-horse under the other

(it was old-fashioned Mr. Wetherspun), fairly cringed and grimaced to show his respect, and passed on happy (as poor Ward Farnell knew too well) at receiving a bow from the great man of the community.

"What will he think — how will he greet me — when he finds that that note of mine is n't worth the paper it is written on?" thought the bankrupt, looking forward to the morrow, when the collapse of his hollow prosperity should be known.

Worse than the poverty he dreaded was the shame of the descent from his proud position; and he could almost envy the lot in which cheery little Mr. Wetherspun had his narrow being. The sight of his own home did not relieve his anguish of mind. That house, which his pride had lately so outgrown, — how comfortable and altogether home-like it appeared to him now! Into this door he had brought his newlywedded wife five-and-twenty years ago; and here his children had been born. What a haven it had been to him in those early days; how full of hope and all gracious affections! The windows were full of light, and the music of a piano reached his ear.

"How little they suspect!" thought he, as he slowly mounted the steps. He dreaded to go in; and yet the miserable man yearned for his oldest girl's consoling presence, half forgetting the pain he was to inflict upon her, in the selfish hunger of his heart for her sympathy and support. Instead of gathering strength for the interview, he grew shamefully weak, and went tremblingly forward to cast the burden of his woes on her.

As he went in the music rushed out, in suddenly loud and jubilant strains. From the entry a side-door opened into a well-lighted room, where Genevieve, the second daughter, a girl of sixteen, sat at the piano. Julia, the oldest, stood before the full-length mirror of the *étagère*, between brilliant lamps, glancing over her shoulder at the reflection of her

elegant bodice and silken train. Close by smiled Miss Clewsey, the dress-maker, severely critical, smoothing here and arranging there ; while Genevieve, playing mechanically her airy waltz, cast easy side-glances at her sister's attire, and offered careless comments.

"Father!" cried Julia, "come here and tell us what you think. You have the best taste, after all."

Yes, Ward Farnell had prided himself on being a connoisseur in the matter of ladies' dresses, and had always taken great satisfaction in seeing his daughters faultlessly arrayed. But it was heart-sickening for him to remember all that now. She had a glimpse of his face as he passed on into the library, and her own changed quickly. "I will see you upstairs," she said to the dress-maker, and swept out of the room with her rustling train.

No lamp was lighted in the library, but a wood-fire in the chimney made a pleasant blaze, and in its flickering gleam father and daughter met. He had sunk down in a deep arm-chair, with his overcoat on and his hat pitched over his eyes, in an attitude of the deepest dejection. She came rustling to his side, fair and tall, in her golden hair and magnificent golden-green robe, and bent over him, removing his hat, while he passed his hand over his head, as if purposely to disarrange his gray locks and give a finishing touch to the picture of misery he felt himself to be.

"Father," she said anxiously, "what is it? your business?" He gave a despairing nod. "Oh, I suspected it; I have felt that something was wrong!" She was on her knee beside him, her silken train brushing the dead cinders of the hearth. "Is it very bad?"

"Bad as possible!" He lifted his sunken head and looked at her with large, deep-set, hopeless, haggard eyes. I am afraid he regarded himself as the central pathetic figure of the scene, and experienced a wretched satisfaction in work-

ing it up melodramatically. She remained silent, with a calm, but white and frightened face, while he went on brokenly: "I don't know what is going to become of us. It is an utter wreck; nothing left."

The calm white face hardened to a severe and almost terrible expression. But it was a beautiful face, still; fair, strong, delicate, slightly aquiline, and full of sweetness, even in its intensity of gaze.

"Why have you gone on in this way?" she demanded, as she rose and threw back her train. "Why have n't you told me before?"

This was not quite what the weak-hearted old man (for he seemed such an old man now!) had looked for. It threw him back on the poor remains of his manhood, and he answered in a somewhat less helplessly broken way,—

"I didn't want to alarm you, daughter. I wished to spare you pain."

"But how much better to have alarmed me in season, to have given me pain! You have let us go on making up dresses we shall never wear, you have gone on sinking money in that great house we shall never live in, when you must have known!"

"I didn't know; I hoped until this very afternoon that I might get through in some shape."

She swept impatiently across the room, but came back and stood again beside him in the firelight.

"But when you saw the danger—for you must have seen it! I know now why you have appeared so troubled!—you might at least have stopped some of our expenses."

"You don't understand," said Ward Farnell, complainingly. "If I had done that, people would have surmised the reason; it would have injured my credit and brought on just what I hoped to avert. You are the last person, daughter, who I thought would blame me. You know it was for you and the

girls I built the new house, not for myself ; and now, to have you — ” Here the old man whimpered outright.

“ Father,” replied Julia, “ I don’t mean to blame you , and I won’t say another word.” She stood for a moment, holding her forehead with both hands, then drew them back with a firm pressure across her temples, putting on a resolutely gentle expression. “ If misfortune has come, we can meet it. Father ! ” — her expression softened still more, as she bent down her eyes and saw how crushed and disconsolate he was, — “ we have a great deal left yet. You are left to us ; we are left to you. Your honor is left ; for you have not failed in business to make yourself richer ; everybody must see that. Now, wait till I have stripped off this finery, and we will see what can be done.”

“ God bless you, daughter,” snuffed the old man.

CHAPTER II.

WARD FARNELL IS SOMEWHAT BETTER.

WHEN Julia appeared in the sewing-room she was composed and cheerful, only the brightness of her eyes and a faint flush on her cheek betraying any excitement.

The artist in silks saw only her own beautiful handiwork, which she scanned with a complacent glance from throat to trail, as she asked, "What did he say to it?"

"Not much; he is not well to-night," Julia replied. "Please help me off with it?"

Miss Clewsey looked disappointed, but answered that he would be sure to like it better when the trimming was finished.

"Miss Clewsey," said Julia, disrobing, "you have said that Mrs. Fenway wants you, and I have concluded to let you go to her to-morrow. I will pay you to-night; I can't tell when I shall want you again."

The universe turned round very fast to poor dizzy Miss Clewsey for a few seconds. Looking at the two, you would have said that it was to her that sudden calamity had come.

Julia returned to the library in a plain dark dress, helped her father remove the overcoat which William Rayburn had helped him put on, and sat down by his side.

"Shall we be able to keep this house?" she quietly asked.

"I am afraid not. Mr. Carolus has a mortgage on it, and you know what sort of a man he is. Goldsmith & Co. have mortgages on everything else. They have placed Mr. Emmons in charge of the store. While he was in my confi-

dence he was in correspondence with them. I believe the man is a villain!"

The bankrupt roused up a little as he said this: it was a comfort to have somebody to blame. In a business-like way Julia inquired about the smaller debts.

"I owe people for borrowed money. Mr. Wetherspun, for one, three hundred dollars; the Wintergreen sisters, about half as much, Widow Rayburn,—I don't remember,—two hundred dollars and some interest."

"Our own neighbors!" said Julia. She thought she had schooled herself to face the family misfortune unflinchingly; but here was a phase of it she had not foreseen. The Wintergreen sisters had barely enough to live on with economy and prudence. Widow Rayburn was William's mother.—another poor woman, though a sister of rich old Mr. Carolus. These confiding people had, for safety, intrusted their money to the merchant; and it was to prevent them from taking alarm that he had continued to bring home costly silks to his girls. Had he, after all, escaped without dishonor?

But even this must be met with fortitude. After a brief struggle with herself, Julia asked,—

"Does William know?"

"I told him to-night; he was expecting it."

"How did he take it?"

"Like the noble fellow he is. Not a word about my debt to his mother or his own wages."

"If he was expecting it, I think he ought to have taken care of his mother's interest."

"He did what he could," said Ward Farnell. "He came to me some days ago, and asked if it was convenient for me to pay her; if not, he wanted me to give my word that she should n't suffer."

"And you gave it?"

"I think I said, 'Of course, Will'; or, 'Oh, certainly';

something of the kind. I hoped to pull through. If I had foreseen the result, I might have made my arrangements, failed at the right time, and saved something."

Julia looked at him with amazed blue eyes: "Father!"

"It's the way people do," he explained. "Men should take care of their own families."

"It's not the way for *you* to do. Father, we can bear to be poor, but not to lose our self-respect."

"But what are we to do? I have neither money nor credit to begin business again. I am cast out, a wreck, in my old age. Nothing before me, as I see, but trundling a wheelbarrow, or the poorhouse. A hard position for a man of my habits and gray hairs, with a family of daughters bred up in luxury. Hard, daughter!"

"There are other things harder than that," said Julia. "But you shall not trundle a wheelbarrow, nor go to the poorhouse. I will see to that."

"You, daughter?" said Ward Farnell, with a stare of pity and incredulity.

"I'll dismiss the servants," she went on, with clear decisiveness of speech and look, "and we can move into a smaller house."

"After all our plans and hopes!" groaned the bankrupt. "A meaner house instead of a better!"

She proceeded fearlessly. "I have a few things I suppose I can call my own, particularly my diamonds."

"Yes, yes, my daughter," he answered eagerly; "the law can't touch those."

"They shall go to pay your poorest creditors, — Mrs. Rayburn and the Wintergreen sisters, at any rate." He groaned again, but did not reply. "The girls and I will do the housework, and I can get a school, then in a year or two Genevieve can teach music."

Having disburdened himself and found so strong and

steadfast a support in Julia, Ward Farnell was beginning to rise from the depths; but he was still a pathetic figure in his own eyes, and wished to remain so in hers.

"No, no, daughter," he said; "I can never stoop so low as to have my daughter toil for me. I can kill myself, but I can never come to that."

He rose, staggered to a closet (he was quite willing she should see that he staggered), took out a decanter, and filled a glass.

"Some hot water, daughter," he said in a feeble voice as he sank down again in his chair. The water brought, he mixed and stirred his grog and still continued in the pathetic line of business, making grimaces, as at some bitter medicine, as he drank. Then, seeing how full of pity her face was as she watched him, he brightened a little.

"Never, daughter!"—finishing the glass. "No child of mine shall ever soil her hands for me. You are the finest lady I ever saw, if I do say it; and a lady you shall remain. You shall wear your jewels and your silks."

"I should be sorry to think it took jewels and silks to make me a fine lady," Julia replied. "For I don't see how we are to keep them."

Ward Farnell stirred and sipped again, not quite so much as if the grog were tansy or wormwood, and brightened more and more.

"You don't know, daughter. I'm a young man yet, just in my prime. Well known in Buffalo and Rochester. I can go to either of those places and set up a commission store,—a safe and profitable business."

Stir, stir; sip, sip. Ward Farnell was evidently better.

"Or I can go to Europe and buy goods for Stewart. I am one of the best judges of silks in the country, and Stewart knows it. How would you like to spend a few years in France, daughter? You would shine in French society. Or

I can go into business with some established firm where my judgment and experience will be considered an offset against the capital invested. You know something of my judgment and experience, daughter."

"Yes," said Julia, thinking the sad pass these fine qualities had brought him to might not be regarded as his best recommendation. He was going on again when she interrupted him. "Tea is waiting; will you go out?"

"Yes,—well,—no, my daughter. Bring me a bit of toast; I want to talk with you. Who is that asking for Mr. Farnell?"

It was little, old-fashioned Mr. Wetherspun.

"Ah, Mr. Wetherspun! walk along; you're the very man I want to see."

The visitor's beady little black eyes shone with excitement as he sputtered forth, "I've just heerd—bad news, if it's true! I'd no more idee on 't'n the man in the moon when I met ye this evenin'. I'd been over to saw a little wood for the Wintergreen gals, for I ain't so rich nor so proud but what I'm willin' to crook my elbows over a saw-hoss; and you may come to 't yourself some day, if what folks say is so."

"Sir!" said Ward Farnell, majestically.

"No offence. I hope 't ain't so. I've come over to see about that note of yours, Mr. Farnell; three hundred 'n' twelve dollars 'n' thirty-seven 'n' a 'alf cents, with intrist. I hope the' won't be no trouble 'bout that."

"No trouble at all, Mr. Wetherspun. There's a little hitch in my affairs just now. But it's only temporary, only temporary."

"I'm glad o' that," said the little man. "Me an' the Wintergreen gals was a-talkin' this arternoon, how comf'table 't was to have a man in town like Ward Farnell, that was willin' to 'commodate us, by takin' any little sums we had to spare, an' keep 'em safe, an' pay intrist on 'em —"

"Yes, yes," said the bankrupt impatiently. "You shall be paid dollar for dollar. Eventually. I may ask a little time."

"I'd ruther have my money to-night," said the frightened little man. "Arter what we've heerd, I sha'n't da's to go hum to my wife 'ithout them three hundred 'n' twelve dollars 'n' thirty seven 'n' a 'alf cents!"

"I can't very well arrange to pay notes out of business hours; a man of sense like you must see that." Ward Farnell laid his hand in a pompous and patronizing way on the bony Wetherspun shoulder. "There'll be a meeting of my creditors in a few days, when everything will be satisfactorily arranged. Take that comforting news home to Mrs. Wetherspun, with Ward Farnell's compliments."

The little man did not seem to think the news would prove so very comforting to the partner of his joys and sorrows; and, evidently regarding with about equal concern what he would have liked to get from the merchant, but could n't, and what he was pretty sure to receive from her, whether he liked it or not, he trudged sadly away.

Other anxious creditors came thronging in, all of whom were graciously assured that the hitch in the merchant's affairs was only temporary, and that everything would be arranged. Genevieve was again at the piano, and Hortense, the youngest, had again taken up her French lessons; but so much passing in and out, and loud talking in the library, caused them to wonder what extraordinary thing was taking place. Julia thought it time for them to know something of it, and called them into her room.

Genevieve, whose soul was all in her music, listened in a sort of unbelieving stupor to the story of the family disaster, and did not seem fully to wake up to the reality of it. Pretty little petted Hortense understood more quickly, and pursed up her lips with grief when told that they could not now hope ever to inhabit the new house.

"Why do you say that?" she exclaimed, petulantly; adding (deceived by Julia's cool demeanor and courageous words), "You act as if you did n't care."

"Oh, my dear child!" and now the brave girl's voice faltered, for she saw that she was to bear the burden, not only for her father, but for her sisters, too; "I can't tell you how much I care, for his sake, yours, and Genevieve's. I say what I do, because it is better to know the truth at once. There's no use in saying or trying to imagine anything else than that we are going to be very poor; but I shall do all I can to make the change easy for you; and you must do all you can to help me make it easy for our poor father. He has been a good, kind father to us; and now I fear he is going to be very much cast down. Girls, we must stand by him; and we must stand by each other. Oh, if our dear mother had not died!"

Here, in spite of her firm resolution, Julia's voice failed her, and she who had not seemed to care, cried like any foolish child.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEMPORARY HITCH BECOMES PERMANENT.

SUDDENLY cut off from business, and deprived of the stimulus which his very struggle against misfortune had supplied, Ward Farnell was, as Julia had foreseen, a much broken man. To dream, to boast, to complain, to excite sympathy, became his life; and it is hard to say whether he felt greater satisfaction when he talked glowingly of his schemes for the future, or when he once more saw the poor-house looming dismally.

The promised meeting of his creditors took place, and everything was certainly in due time arranged, though by no means to the satisfaction of some old-fashioned people who held to narrow views of honesty, and could not be convinced that they had been cheated in a perfectly fair and honorable way.

"The idee," said sour-faced Mrs. Wetherspun, "of *our* furnishin' *him* money to put on to the backs of his upstart hussies, and build his span-grand Folly!"

"Span-grand" was an effort of Mrs. Wetherspun's own imagination. But the "Folly"—alas! that term of playful contempt had been popularly bestowed on the unfinished mansion almost before the last Irishman with his wheelbarrow left the grounds. How many houses with like histories, I wonder, similarly christened, as "Smith's Folly," or "Brown's Folly," are standing in the land to-day, looking down from lonesome hills, sad monuments to the vanity of their founders?

When the ripples of social excitement closed over Ward Farnell's sunken reputation, to be stirred again a little when the old home had to be given up and the best of the furniture sold, — including the piano, which Julia had been so anxious to keep for Genevieve, — a humble little house on Mill Street received the exiles. He was very much opposed to coming down so low; but while he smoked his pipe and talked of reconstructing the family fortunes, she quietly carried out her plans. Quietly, but with untold anxiety and endeavor. It was she who furnished forethought and energy for the whole family. Her father was almost as much a child as Hortense, and far more impracticable, with his endless whims and objections; while poor, dazed, dreamy, inert Genevieve had not only to be told at every turn what to do, but supplied with the will and skill to do it. It would have been amusing if it had not been so pitiful to watch that full-cheeked, fair young creature standing appalled, with dangling hands, before some mountainous molehill — some slight household task which Julia would have despatched with easy tact while she was wondering how it should be begun; to see those fingers, accustomed to no ruder contact than piano keys, shrink from soiling themselves with the dish-cloth, just touching it with reluctant, dainty tips; to note the time she gave, when time had become so precious, to the most trifling concerns, — as if she had her life before her for tying a ribbon, and all eternity to mend a glove in. Such distressing inefficiency was a trial to Julia, who often found it easier to do the task herself than to expend time and strength in showing and urging, and perhaps, after all, not getting it done.

There was a feeble side to her father's character which accounted for this defect of Genevieve's. Julia never quite understood him until after the failure, when, reviewing the past by the light of new experience, she used to wonder if he ever would have accomplished anything in life without her

mother, for it was with marriage that his prosperity really began, and in his widowerhood that it had rapidly declined. He was one of those men who owe success, perhaps enduring fame, to an influence which is commonly a cipher in the world's account of them, while it multiplies their native capacity tenfold,—the inspiring and restraining influence of woman.

Julia's jewels, meanwhile, with the single exception of a ring that had been her mother's, had gone secretly to a trustworthy dealer in Buffalo and come back to her in the shape of crisp bank-notes. These she hoarded with such privacy and used with such discretion that not even her father knew by what means the family flour and fuel were supplied. And now one day—it was the month of February—she came home from a walk with a rosy and joyous countenance, and informed him, as he sat smoking by the kitchen fire, that she had at last got what she had been so long seeking,—a situation. He took the pipe from his mouth and turned upon her a reproachful look.

"Yes," she went on, "Miss Hanson is to be married, and I am to have her place in the seminary."

He could hardly have seemed more hurt if she had said she was going to forsake him.

"Daughter!" he said, after a solemn pause, "it is preposterous! Do you think I can ever consent to see a child of mine go out and earn her living?"

Julia answered with spirit, "Do you suppose it is only my own living I am going to earn? Some of us must do something, and that soon. I am to teach French, history, and English composition; I don't see why that is worse than working hard, as I have to, here at home. Now I can afford to hire the hardest of our housework done."

"Daughter, you talk very cruelly to me," snuffled Ward Farnell, refilling his pipe. "An old man like me!"—crowd-

ing the tobacco into the bowl with his forefinger. "After all I have done for my family, now, to cap the climax of my misfortunes, to have the ingratitude of a child!"

"Ingratitude! O father!"

"My best days are over, I know. I'm no longer of any account. I wish I had died when your mother did; then I could have left you a fortune. Now I have left you only myself. A bad legacy, a bad legacy!"

"O father!" exclaimed the distressed Julia, "what have I said?"

"Nothing but the truth; I'm a cumberer of the ground. I can't blame you for wishing me out of the way. But your mother would never have spoken to me as you did, daughter!"

She came and stood beside him, while he fingered his pipe-bowl and heaved prodigious sighs.

"Can't you understand me, father? I was only trying to explain that it is necessary for one of us to earn something. It seems to me that I am that one. I do it willingly, more than willingly. I can't tell how glad I am of the chance to earn ten dollars a week!"

"Ten dollars a week, daughter! What is that for a family like ours to live on? How little you know!"

"It's a small amount, to be sure. But it is better than nothing, father!"

"Nothing?" said the old man, impatiently. "Have n't I told you? I am going to launch out in the spring. I shall put my hand to the wheel, and bring the family fortunes up to the level where they belong." And reaching forward, he struck a match on the stove.

"I hope you will," said Julia; "but I don't see just how you are going to do it."

"Why, daughter!" Ward Farnell rose to his feet as he lighted his pipe. Puff, puff. "There are a hundred things a man of talent and enterprise can always turn his hand

to. I can go to New York any day, and get a situation as walker in Stewart's store. I am sure my friend Stewart would be glad to have me at five thousand a year, and find me cheap at that." His eye kindled with his pipe, his shadowy schemes expanded with the smoke. "Why, my daughter, the very poorest thing I have in mind is to go to Lockport and engage as a buyer of wheat for one of the great flouring-mills. There's no better judge of wheat in the country. The moment I see the berry I see the flour that can be made from that berry. I go out in the street. A load of grain drives up. I have the manners of a gentleman; everything in my favor. The owner shows his samples, and I say instantly, 'so much,' or 'so much.' He sees at once that I am a person of character and experience. His grain goes to our mill, and I look out for the next load. A very pretty and gentlemanly employment, daughter."

"I think so," replied Julia, without enthusiasm, however, having "thought so" of so many of his schemes that she was beginning to find her own answers to him disheartening. "But in the mean time why not let me undertake this?"

Ward Farnell puffed and meditated. "Well, temporarily, daughter, if your mind is set on it. But understand!" He held out his pipe and regarded her with pious solemnity. "It's a matter of principle; no daughter of mine shall toil for her living, or soil her hands for me!"

Having said this with strong emotion, he sat down again, put his feet on the stove-hearth, winked away something which resembled a tear as the mist resembles the rain, and puffed his consolatory pipe.

At the same time, in sight of the very eye that winked, Julia took a pail from the sink, went out through a badly shovelled path to the well, drew water and lugged it in, with much toil and peril of slipping, and lifted the full pail again to the shelf, before the parental eyelids were well dried.

CHAPTER IV.

WILL AND MARIAN.

THAT evening William Rayburn from the store came to the house. He had never been in the habit of making friendly calls in the family: much as he admired Julia at a distance, he was sensitive and reserved, and would never venture so far in the old days when he was Ward Farnell's clerk. Wouldn't the successful merchant have stared well to see even the best of his "boys" drop in of an evening in a familiar way? It would have required more assurance than Will Rayburn possessed to meet the look of surprise with which he would then have been met,—which would have said with embarrassing plainness, "Well, my lad! what business brings you here at this hour?"

The "lad" was about three-and-twenty, taller by half a head than Ward Farnell himself, and yet not very tall; with a face that lighted up with something between bashfulness and pleasure as Julia, lamp in hand, received him in the entry. He tried to slip something into the other hand which she gave him, but she laughingly drew it back.

"I didn't think this of you!" he said in a tone of playful yet tender reproach, "to take advantage of my mother as you did to-day. You surprised her into accepting this money, but now she agrees with me that you must take it back."

"But *I* don't agree with you, by any means!" she replied. "It is only a part of the debt. I should have paid so much of it before, if I had known how we were to be situated; and I shall pay the rest when I can. But *he* need know nothing about it,"—with a glance at the closed door behind her, low-

ering her voice. "I also paid the Wintergreen sisters a part of their debt to-day,—as soon as I knew I was to have a salaried situation."

"I am glad you are to have that. Still, you must take back this money," William insisted. "It doesn't belong to you to pay it, you need it more than we do."

"I need to relieve my mind of it more than anything," she replied with radiant satisfaction. "Come, William, be good, and I will promise you one thing. If I find I really need it I will let you know, and borrow it again,—if you will trust me." On the strength of this promise he discontentedly put the money into his pocket. "Now won't you come in and see father? He is lonesome these long evenings."

As she threw open the sitting-room door, Ward Farnell looked around at the visitor with none of the questioning, imperious stare which might have been expected of him in his prosperous days.

"Why, bless me! Will Rayburn! This is an unexpected pleasure!"

"We are near neighbors now," said Will, as if the merchant's changed circumstances had nothing whatever to do with the matter which, pleasure or not, was so unexpected.

Ward Farnell answered with less delicacy, taking his feet from a chair which he offered the visitor, and putting away his pipe. "Yes, William, neighbors. I wouldn't have believed that ever my family would have come down so far as to take a cottage on Mill Street! My enemies have treated me with the utmost rigor, Ward Farnell had got to be humbled. But I am not humbled. Ward Farnell is prouder than ever, and has reason to be."

"I think you have very good reason to be," Will answered, glancing around the room, which the hand of taste had made so neat and comfortable, and considering what a treasure the old man had in his daughters.

"Aye, aye! the old lion ain't dead yet. They'll hear him roar before long." And the king of beasts put out his paw with an imposing gesture. "They'll hear him roar, and be astonished. You'll wake up some fine morning and see my daughters once more where they belong,—in that new house on the hill. Fact, William. Mum's the word. Wait till you see us there."

"Certainly,—till I see you there," said William, a good deal surprised.

"I predict," said Ward Farnell, with a gleam of satisfaction, "that your big man Daskill and his man Friday, Emmons, will run the business into the ground within a year, and that it will come back into my hands. It stands to reason. They don't know how to manage it. I am the only man who ever did know how to manage it. You're aware of that, William."

William admitted that he was very well aware of the manner in which Ward Farnell had managed his affairs.

"That Daskill is full of brag; but shallow, shallow! What's more disgusting than to see so much brag and pomposity crop out in a man without any substratum of solid ability?"

William did not reply. Julia, who had taken her seat by the table with some sewing in her hands, bent over it with a blush. A light knock at the street door was heard just then; there was a rustle in the entry, an outburst of girlish voices, laughter and whispering; then in came Genevieve, drawing a reluctant companion after her.

"It's Marian Fenway, Julia! When I told her you had company she was going to run off again."

A charming young girl now came frankly forward, her fresh and vivacious features flashing smiles. She turned quickly from one to the other, saying,—

"O Julia! I've heard such good news!—How do you

do, Will? — It's so kind in you, Mr. Farnell, to let her come up and put a little life into that old seminary! She is to be my teacher, you know. I just ran in to tell you how glad I am, Julia. I did n't know" — with a shy glance at Will — "you had company."

"I hope you were not going to run off again on my account," said Will. "That would n't be worth while; I am just going myself."

"No, no! sit down, both of you," said Julia. And she gave Miss Fenway a seat near Will. The two looked at each other inquiringly for a moment, and then both laughed; she with fascinating sweetness, he with a joy that beamed out from his candid, generous face, as if in spite of some grave resolution. "Come! I want you to be friends," Julia whispered. Here was evidently a little romance of the heart of which she knew the secret.

"Yes," said Ward Farnell, "it was a sacrifice, but I gave my consent. Julia needs something to occupy her mind, and she thought she would like to teach. Only temporarily, you understand. A girl of her powers must find an outlet for them somewhere. There's not a more thorough scholar or more competent manager, of her sex, in the whole country. She graduated at the seminary, and they know what she is."

Julia laughed. "I don't know that my brain is quite ready to burst with a sense of unused powers! but one thing I am sure of, the necessity of earning some money." Since the failure she had shown herself resolutely opposed to any attempt at false appearances, and she would not countenance even her father in that foolishness. "Now," she added, "we can hire a piano for Genevieve."

"Why don't you let her come in and use mine?" said Miss Fenway. "I should be delighted to have her."

"She is to have a piano of her own, and a fine one," said

Ward Farnell, emphatically. "This lull in our affairs is only transient, merely transient; I am making my plans." So saying, he walked out into the kitchen, where presently might have been heard the suggestive tinkle of a spoon stirring in a glass.

Marian and Will were not quite at ease with each other; lovers who have quarrelled seldom are. Miss Fenway chatted awhile, then rose.

"My minute is up—I only ran out for a minute; the boys were coming this way with their sleds. I must flit back."

"You are not going alone?" said Julia.

"Why not?" cried Marian.

"Because," Will interposed, "I am going with you if you will let me."

"Take you away from Julia? No, no!" said Marian gayly. "Good night."

But Will followed her out. He came to her side as she was tripping along the trodden snow in the white and starry night.

"We can be good friends between here and your house, can't we?" he said.

"I don't see why we can't always be friends," she replied with a tender little laugh, as she suffered him to draw her hand within his arm and press it there ever so softly.

"Then why were you going to hurry off again as soon as you found I was in the house?"

She tipped her little Grecian nose up at him in the snow light, with an arch, fond smile.

"I supposed you didn't want to see me, you have avoided me so of late!"

"But you know why I have avoided you. Marian!"—a strong emotion was beginning to master his tones—"I don't understand you. Sometimes you are so kind to me, and then suddenly—for no cause that I can see—you are so cold.

You know all my heart; you know what I would have, and until you can make up your mind to say plainly *yes* or *no* to me, I had better keep away from you—I must keep away! I can't endure the torture any longer."

"Why, Will! I don't mean to be anything but kind to you."

"I know you don't. And if you obeyed your own heart, I believe you would say *yes* to me, once for all, and with all your heart, to-night. What is your mother's great objection to me?"

"You are not a religious man. O Will!" said Marian softly, "if you could only meet with a change of heart!"

"I would if I could. I would do anything to gain heaven—that is you!" said Will ardently.

"Will Rayburn!" The words gave her a delicious thrill, yet she felt it her duty to reprove him. "Don't talk profanely."

"Not at all. I am simply talking sincerely. I can't conceive of any better heaven, or any that would be heaven without you. You don't like to hear me say that."

"Yes, I do!" she replied, with enchanting frankness. "But you mustn't; it is wrong—and here we are at our gate."

"Don't go in yet," Will pleaded. "Let's take a little walk, the evening is so pleasant."

"What will my mother say?" she whispered as she yielded.

"I don't care," said Will, and led her along the creaking path, between the silent house and the wayside elms standing still and bare in the snow. For a while only their own footsteps were heard, with now and then the shouts of children coasting down a neighboring street, and the murmur of water not far off. They crossed a bridge, beneath which the stream flowed cold and black between its snow-covered banks; and kept on up High Street.

"Your mother don't understand me," Will resumed. "I am not an irreligious man. I don't know just what you mean

by a change of heart; but if it is to have spasms of conscience, or fear, and talk in meeting, and tell folks what a sinner I am, hoping all the while they won't believe me — ”

“ Oh, it is n't that ! ” she interrupted him.

“ I have all my life had serious thoughts about heaven and about God,” he rejoined. “ When I was a mere child, not more than nine or ten years old, I used to lie on the ground and look up through the trees into the sky, and think about time and space and my own existence, until my soul fairly ached with the effort to reach the origin and meaning of things. What questions I asked myself ! Who were my own parents, friends, and playmates ? Were they real persons, or only pictures ? Was the world itself anything but a picture given me for my development ? Or was I myself merely a dream ? At one time I was a frightful little egotist ; then again I doubted my own reality. But I suppose everybody has had such fancies in childhood ; no doubt you have had.”

“ I can't say I ever have. And I think you must have been a remarkable child.”

“ I had those mental struggles. And, Marian, — I never told anybody before, but I will tell you, — I used to pray. I can remember walking in the woods and praying aloud in childish agony of spirit that I might know the very truth about what I heard preached, promising to live that truth at any sacrifice, if it were shown me.”

Then they walked on, talking of other things. “ How lonesome poor old Mr. Farnell's house looks up there ! ” said Marian. “ What a pity he could n't have it finished according to his taste, or Julia's ! It would have been just such a home as the dear girl ought to have.”

“ I don't know,” Will replied. “ I think I like her better where she is.”

“ What a lovely girl she is ! ” exclaimed Marian. “ I am surprised, Will, that you don't admire her more.”

"I? I admire her extremely. Never so much as now."

"Do you know," Miss Fenway confessed, with a charming little laugh, "when I saw you there to-night, I thought—perhaps—since you did n't come to see me any more—you were going to be just a little bit in love with her?"

Will did not laugh. He was singularly grave.

'If I were in love with a girl like her, it would n't be just a little bit; she is one to call out the best which the very best man has to give. I might have been as foolish as so many other young fellows have been, but for somebody else I know.' And he gave the little hand on his arm a little squeeze.

"Perhaps it would n't have been so foolish in you as in them. She and I have had many confidential talks—about you, sometimes. I know she has always liked you; for one thing particularly."

"What is that? Let me know the virtue, so that I may cultivate it."

"I'm willing to tell you," laughed Marian, "since the more you cultivate it the more you can't have her. Does that sound paradoxical? Well, she told me once that she liked you especially because you did n't make haste to offer yourself to her, as all the other young men did."

"Then, when I do offer myself to her," said Will, "I shall do it deliberately, and not in haste."

"Do you mean it?" asked Marian, alarmed at his serious tone, the mere thought of Julia's drawing him away quickening her appreciation of him in a wonderful degree.

"Mean it? You know this," Will exclaimed fervently; "as long as you are kind to me, no other woman in the world can come between us."

"I will be kind!" murmured Marian with thrilling sweetness.

"Does that mean you will say that little word to-night?"

"Oh! I can't to-night."

"When, then? To-morrow night?"

"Yes, — perhaps."

"You will say *yes* or *no*!"

"I think so; I hope so!" said Marian with a fervor of tone which told plainly enough which of the little words it would be.

She renewed this promise at her father's door, and sealed it with something sweeter for the moment than the coveted word itself.

"To-morrow night, then!" said Will at parting. "O Marian! now be true to yourself and me!"

"I will!" was her last word to him: the last he was to hear from those lips for many a day. If she had known that, would she have fluttered down with so happy a heart in her soft nest that night? Or, had it seemed possible to him, would he have gone home through the winter's ice and snow with all the flowers and birds of spring blossoming and singing in his soul?

CHAPTER V.

THE MISSION OF A BLACK DOG.

WHEN Marian Fenway woke the next morning and thought of her mother, she was afraid that in giving Will even that promise of a promise she had gone too far. Not that Mrs. Fenway wished her daughter absolutely to dismiss the young man, for the time might come when, notwithstanding his lack of piety, it might be highly convenient to accept his offer, if no better was to be had.

It grieves me to say that the young lady had, at this date, other suitors, more or less in earnest, whom she neither decidedly encouraged nor actually repelled, but kept within call, according to mamma's wise precepts. She was young yet; and had nature given her such graces of person, and had her parents bestowed such pains and expense on her education, sending her latterly to be finished in the highest style of feminine accomplishments at Miss Maybloom's famous seminary, that she might place her lovely hand at last (it *was* a lovely hand and she knew it) in that of a common clerk or mechanic?

"How absurd!" said little Mrs. Fenway.

But does the auctioneer make haste to inform the first moderate bidders for his goods that they had better go home? Does he not rather invite competition?—"Look at the article, gentlemen; it does n't cost anything to admire it,"—keeping the interest up and the hammer suspended until the best bid is in. Wide-awake Mrs. Fenway would have made a very good auctioneer. True, she had suffered her older daughter

to throw herself away on a pedler; but, then, Lottie never was such a girl as Marian!

Thoughts of her mother on one side, and on the other of Will coming that evening for his final answer, filled Miss Fenway's fond but timid heart with a sweet trouble all that day. In her class she appeared absent and dreamy, and on her way home she walked apart from her companions, who wondered what made her so silent and so grave. Was she thinking of her imperfect recitations, or pondering the excellent advice Miss Maybloom had just been giving, without extra charge (being about the only thing she ever did give without extra charge), to certain young ladies of her school?

She carried home her text-books for study, or pretence of study, in the evening, — French, history, and English literature, with pencilled exercises on loose leaves slipping out between the covers. But hidden among these was a little note, the contents of which were more to her than all the schools and all the books in the world. She had read it already many times, but now she must peep at it again.

"Do you think of to-night as I do? Do you think of our parting last night? O Marian! you will be true, I know. Do not let anybody influence you for a moment against the promptings of your own pure, beautiful, unselfish soul. Forgive me for saying that; it is needless, I am sure. I only set out to write one little word as a relief to my heart, which is so full of hope and happiness that I am aching to tell you of it every hour and every minute of the day."

Again and again she pored over these words, so insipid to the unsympathizing reader, but so delicious to her.

"Nobody ever loved me as he does," she said to herself, "and I am sure I shall never love anybody else as I do Will! I am glad he is coming and that it is to be all settled to-night. Poor mamma!" and she gave a little tender, half-frightened laugh.

"Marian! Marian!" called two or three gay voices, startling her from her revery; and, looking up, she saw her companions standing in front of the Folly beckoning to her.

"What will you give us?" they said as she came up. "We have found your lost dog. There he is!"

"Franco!" cried Marian. "Come here, Franco!"

But the dog, having taken his station beside one of the lions that flanked the steps of the Folly, did not stir. She commanded and coaxed, but he only turned his head lazily, winked, and sat still. The other girls, thinking he might be shy of them, walked on, while Marian, tripping up the icy avenue to the house, patted and poor-fellowed him vivaciously, all to no purpose. She might as well have tried to persuade one of the couchant lions on guard to step down and follow her.

While she was thus occupied, the door of the abandoned house opened and a stranger appeared. He lifted his hat politely, and, seeing what she was trying to do, stood on the porch and watched her with an amused smile.

"Can't you prevail on him to go with you?" he asked.

"I'm afraid I can't."

"He must be a stupid fellow! I don't see how he can possibly resist such an invitation; I am sure I could n't."

"If you please, will you speak to him?" said Marian. "Perhaps he will mind you. Call him Franco."

"Franco?" repeated the man, lifting his eyebrows with a curious expression. "Certainly; I'll call him Franco if you wish. Here, Franco!"

The dog jumped up, turned round, looked at him inquiringly, wagging his tail, and saying as plainly as a dog's eyes and tail could say, "I don't just understand this joke." Then he sat down again.

"He minds me, you see." And the stranger stood in the porch, provokingly cool and complacent, still watching her.

Marian blushed red as a rose, not knowing whether, under the circumstances, she appeared very ridiculous or very charming.

She felt that she was undergoing the scrutiny of no common man. He could not simply stand in the porch there without showing by his attitude and air that he was a person of importance and knowledge of the world. How resolutely erect he bore that aggressive head of his on the well-curved neck and easy shoulders! Not handsome, but there was that about him which goes further in society, and especially with women, than any fineness of feature. And Marian thought him young; misled, perhaps, by the airy, youthful manner of him, and not observing the white threads in his thick, dark beard and the marks of old experience about his eyes.

• “If I go, too, perhaps he will follow,” he suggested.

“I would n’t put you to so much trouble,” Marian replied.

“But it would be no trouble at all,” he said. “Come, Franco!” And Franco came obediently.

“How provoking! to see him mind you, while he pays not the least attention to me; naughty Franco!” And she shook her reproving finger at him, coquettish even with the dog. “I am very jealous!”

“You need n’t be. Dogs always take to me; I have a sort of magnetic power over animals. Ah, pardon! you will slip!”

In the most graceful and gallant manner the stranger placed his hand beneath her arm and helped her over the ice. How flattered and pleased she was by such attentions from such a man! Where was the sweetly troubled look her pretty downcast features wore but a little while ago?

“This place is delightfully situated,” the gentleman remarked, looking back at the Folly. “Poor Farnell would have made something fine here if his means had held out. I rather like that French-château style of house. And he has planned his walks and groves very well, though I would n’t

have had that clump of Norways where they are ; they will eventually hide the view. His cascade—I suppose it is meant for a cascade—looks like a bit of badly constructed bank-wall ; it is going to be a good deal of trouble to bring the water to it. He has shown a great deal of taste, however. I am rather surprised at it in a man like Ward Farnell.”

“It is more his daughter’s taste than his own,” said Marian. “Julia Farnell is a girl of wonderful talents.”

“Ah?” said the stranger, noticing the enthusiasm with which she spoke of her friend. “She must be an extraordinary person.”

“Oh, she is! and the most beautiful girl there is in this little corner of the world!”

“I don’t see how that can well be!” And the stranger gave Miss Fenway a remarkably expressive look.

She appeared not even to have heard this adroitly shot arrow of a compliment sing past her ; while it was quivering in her foolish little heart.

“It is very lovely up here in summer,” she said, demurely.

“It must be ; the view from those terraces is superb, even in winter. How pretty your village looks, nestled down there ! and the frozen mill-pond, and the stream coming in through those wooded hills ! If I were only a married man, I believe I’d take this place and fit it up for my summer residence.”

“I wish somebody would fit it up and live in it,” said Marian. “It would be so delightful !”

As she glanced back at the unfinished mansion, an intoxicating dream arose and overspread, with its perfumed wings, the young girl’s life. Was it her mother’s subtle teaching, or her own apt heart, which made her so quick to catch up and translate into golden possibilities the words the stranger had let fall ?

“I should like no better amusement for a year or two, than

just to make a little paradise out of Farnell's Folly. It might easily be done," said the gentleman, confidently.

"If marriage is a necessary qualification, I should think you might easily qualify yourself," Miss Fenway replied.

The stranger took his hat quite off, as he thanked her; saying it was encouraging to hear so favorable a judgment from such lips; and they both laughed; and Marian, to conceal her pleasure and her blushes, looked back again and said, "Is Franco coming? yes, here he is."

"Oh, he'll come fast enough! I never should have built such a house myself, especially in such an out-of-the-world place as this." (That made Marian quite ashamed of her poor little "out-of-the-world" village.) "It is too far from the great centres of life and business. If it was within an hour's drive of Buffalo or Chicago, it might bring something near its cost, if I should conclude to sell it."

Then Marian, it seemed, was talking with the present proprietor of the Folly! How interesting! What would the girls say, if they knew?

"One might spend one's summers here very pleasantly, though. I like the village pretty well, all but the trip-hammers. I woke this morning, dreaming that a flock of fanning-mills flew over my head; and it was their unconscionable noise."

"They are—rather noisy," said Marian, apologetically. She did not add that the trip-hammers were her father's. It seemed to her very coarse and vulgar to have trip-hammers, just then.

Talking in this pleasant way, and getting better and better acquainted, they kept on down High Street, and through the village, until they came to Brook Street.

"We live on this street," Marian said. "I think Franco will go with me now. I am very much obliged to you."

But the dog still obstinately refused to go with her alone,

—just as the stranger expected. He laughed and said, “If you mean to take him home, I don’t see how you can help inviting me.”

“If you will be so kind,” she replied. “It is only a few steps.” Then she scolded the shaggy brute again: “Naughty boy! to give the gentleman so much trouble.”

The Fenways lived in a large, low-roofed, quaint old house, which had never looked so mean in Marian’s eyes as it did that afternoon, when she brought the supposed proprietor of the Folly to the door. “Of course I could never expect him to call on me here,” she thought, as she thanked him again for his kindness, and tried to call the dog in.

“I shall have to go in, too!” he laughed.

And Marian, fluttering between perplexity and delight, showed him into a large, comfortable sitting-room, the dog following. Then the least she could do was to invite him to be seated while she secured the animal; and he sat down before the cheerful blaze of an old-fashioned fireplace.

“I will take him into the kitchen and shut him up,” said Marian.

“To do that, I’m afraid you’ll have to take me into the kitchen, and shut me up, too!”

“No; I’ll manage him now!”

She brought a strap, and felt for the dog’s collar, which his shaggy mane nearly concealed, and was preparing to fasten him by it; stooping over him, her curls almost touching his, and her whole attitude and expression wonderfully animated and engaging, when she suddenly drew back, with an exclamation, —

“Why! his collar has been changed! What name is this? ‘*A. Daskill.*’”

“That is my name,” said the agent of Goldfinch & Co., with a quiet smile, handing out his card.

“And — the dog?” ejaculated Marian, recoiling with as

pretty a horrified expression as ever face of lovely maiden wore.

"It is my dog, Romeo."

"Oh!"—throwing up her hands with a delightful little scream—"why did n't you tell me?"

"You did n't ask me. You seemed to have taken a fancy to him, and I was quite willing he should go with you,—more than willing, indeed, since it was necessary I should go too."

Mr. A. Daskill seemed greatly to enjoy the pleasantry in his quiet, polite way; while Marian, covered with confusion and blushes, looked again at the dog, thinking there must be some mistake, he was such an image of Franco. But just then the true Franco bounced through the entry and into the room, followed by an excited small boy, shouting, —

"Marian! I've found our dog! Here's Franco! Hello! what big dog is that?"

"Romeo, be still!" said Mr. Daskill, as the two Newfoundlands began to sniff and growl at each other, looking enough alike to have been long-separated twin-brothers.

"Want to let 'em fight? say, mister! let 'em fight?" said the boy, preparing to back his dog with a very considerable wager.

"Stop your nonsense!" said Miss Fenway, with recovered self-possession, since the appearance of the true Franco was sufficient to convince Mr. Daskill that she had been innocent of any covert designs on either him or his dog. "Frank, this is Mr. Daskill. (Take off your cap!) We have had Franco only for a short time; and we had lost him once before."

"Oh, but he did n't run away this time!" cried Frank, patting his namesake's back. "I found him up in Cragin's old barn; and don't you think, that rascal of a Tom had stole him, and got a big chain around his neck, and was going to sell him, and we never should have seen hide or hair of him again,

only Will Rayburn told me that he heard a dog howl over there, and I got dismissed and went over and found him, and did n't I give Tom a rap on the shins with his darned old trace-chain! Say! my dog can lick that dog, mister, bet you a million dollars!"

Marian turned both the boy and his dog out of the room. Then Mr. Daskill took his hat.

"Romeo was always a faithful animal," he said, in a tone too sincere for mere compliment; "but he never did me better service than when he introduced me to your acquaintance, which, with your permission" (holding Miss Fenway's hand), "I shall hope to cultivate."

"It will give me great pleasure;—if I can ever forget how ridiculous I made myself!" said Marian, with sweet modesty.

"You have not made yourself anything but extremely interesting and agreeable, I assure you!"

Mr. Daskill looked into her eyes with a steady, dilating, radiant expression in his own, as he said this. Although she veiled her consciousness of it by softly dropping her lids, it was easy to see that she was not displeased.

Then he said, "I shall do myself the honor of calling again before I leave town. Come, Romeo!" Exeunt Daskill and dog.

CHAPTER VI.

MARIAN AT HOME.

"FOR mercy's sake, Marian, who under the sun was that?" cried a round little red-faced woman, bustling into the room, with pins in one corner of her mouth and hooking her belt by the way. "I hurried to change my dress and put on a collar; but I was just too late!"

Marian, who had dropped into an easy-chair, and sat looking with an intense, dreamy expression at the fire, heaved a sigh, and with a smile and a pretty shrug of her graceful shoulders gave the gentleman's card.

"*Adolphus Daskill!* Why, ain't that the Buffalo man?" said the little woman, out of the side of her mouth that was free from pins. "Where *did* you make his acquaintance?"

Marian broke into a laugh. "It's the funniest adventure! Will you believe, ma? he is the new owner of the Folly, and he says he would fit it up for a summer residence if he was only a married man; and he is just as nice and polite as he can be!"

"Do tell me! I want to know now if he is!" said Mrs. Fenway, with excited hand sticking pins in her collar. "And rich? Though he must be rich, if he has bought the Folly! How did you meet him? I'm dying to know!"

"It was so ridiculous! You see, I thought his dog was our dog; and I was coaxing and pulling and patting him, to make him go with me, when a gentleman came out of the Folly. It was Mr. Daskill. He never told me it was his dog at all, but said he thought he would be more willing to go with me if he went, too; and he never gave me a hint of my

mistake until we had got into this house. Then Frank came in with Franco, and there were two dogs instead of one!"

"Why, how absurd!" said Mrs. Fenway. "But I hope — is he really a desirable acquaintance?"

Marian gave an expressive little nod. Then the two fell to whispering about I scarce know what, except that the names of Will Rayburn and "this Mr. Daskell" and of divers other gentlemen were overheard by little black Nance in the kitchen; when Master Frank burst in again at an unlucky moment, interrupting the conversation

"Say, Marian! what big-feeling chap was that? straight as if he'd swallowed a beanpole! That bosom-pin of his beat the Dutch, but his shirt was n't over 'n' above clean, and oh, my! what a stiff, stand-up paper collar! I bet he's a traveller, and slept in his shirt and put on a dicky he carried in his hat, when he got up this morning. That's *my* opinion of him."

"I wish you would learn to hold your tongue, Frank Fenway!" said Marian. "I never was so ashamed, as when you broke out so coarsely and said you'd bet a million dollars your dog could lick the other one!"

"Well, you just bring Franco alongside a dog of his size — I don't care if he is a little bigger — and let me rub his ears and say 'sick,' — that's all!"

"I'll 'sick' you!" said Mrs. Fenway, with a sudden flash of temper. "There!" — a smart box. "Now rub your own ears, and see how you like it! Let me hear of your showing such manners to Marian's company again, and see what you'll get."

"I swan!" muttered Frank, rubbing one ear and one eye, and shaking his head resentfully as he withdrew towards the kitchen. "I'll set him on to you some day!"

"What's that, sass-box?"

His mother made a dash at him. But he was prepared for

her this time. He was never afraid of her except when she was angry, and now he had stinging evidence that her temper was up.

"Sass-box yourself!" he shouted back to her as he escaped through the kitchen and slammed the door in her face.

Mrs. Fenway, rushing out, was just in time to see him run off with Franco and his sled, fling himself upon the latter, head-foremost and heels up, and go speeding down the icy hillside and out on the frozen pond, the frantic Franco barking and plunging after him, and then helping him draw the sled back up the hill; which operation she did not wait to witness, but, returning to the kitchen, caught black Nance — always a convenient safety-vent for the good lady's temper — and played an extremely lively if somewhat dissonant tune upon that humble instrument.

"There! take that, you good-for-nothing! I'll teach you better manners than to giggle at me!"

And, leaving the weeping innocent to pick up the teakettle (scarce blacker or wetter than her own tearful face) which she had been filling at the sink, and which had been overturned in the onset, Mrs. Fenway swept back into the sitting-room and finished her conference with Marian as calmly and comfortably as if nothing unusual had happened.

Indeed, it may be said that nothing unusual had happened.

"My little woman's temper," tall Miles Fenway used good-humoredly to say, "goes off at a touch, like a fire-cracker; then in half a minute the house will be as quiet as a Quaker meeting, unless she has left some of us yelping."

"I'm quick mad, and quick over it; quick hot, and quick cold again," the little woman herself had been heard to confess, or rather boast, for she seemed to think it no such unmeritorious trait. "I never lay up anything; I hate an Injun disposition! I don't think I ever struck one of my boys in my life without I was put out at something. A word

and a blow, and then laugh and make up—that's me!" And she took her little pinch of snuff, and smiled complacently at herself, little considering the effect of the word and blow upon those who lacked the happy faculty of being hot and then cold again in an instant. The philosophical Miles Fenway, who was not subject to violent heats, did not often experience the necessity of getting cool; and Marian, the favorite, could never do anything wrong in her mother's partial eyes. But poor Lottie, so sensitive to feel an injury, and so slow to forget—what had she not suffered from the sharp maternal tongue and sudden hand ever since the days of her earliest recollections, when she, a hungry-hearted, wondering child, rocked little baby Marian in the cradle, and got all the cuffs and frowns, while the new-born princess received all the praises and favors! And Walter, the elder son, now fifteen, by nature gifted with much of his father's good humor and honest sense, what made him, often for days, so sullen and so silent?

Frank and black Nance, with their light hearts, made the best of their little domestic tribulations; of course, despising madam's authority, and fearing only her rage. They had learned, by constant practice, to keep a sharp look-out for squalls, reefing sails, or running for port, when they saw one coming, and laughing when its fury was spent. On the present occasion, Nance was singing again in a few minutes, setting the supper-table; and Frank, having forgotten his wrongs in the excitement of sliding down hill (the New England term *coasting* had not yet reached Waybrook), returned whistling home, put up his sled, and came into the house as fearlessly as if mamma had been an angel.

"Frankie dear," she remonstrated with him affectionately, "I wouldn't slide down that hill the way you do. Every time I see you, I expect nothing in the world but that you will get a broken neck."

"I'll risk all the broken necks! just as if I could n't take care of myself!" said Frankie dear, scornfully.

"Well, do be careful! Now wash your hands and face, and get ready for supper."

"Can't I have a piece of pie, first? I'm all-fired hungry!"

"I'll give you a piece if you won't say *all-fired* again."

"Well, I won't." Then, as soon as he had got the pie and taken a bit, he mumbled forth laughingly, with his mouth full, "This is *all-fired* good, though, ma!" And he tossed a fragment of the crust to Franco, to see him catch it.

"What a boy you are!" said his mother.

Just then Walter came in. It was one of his silent days. Mamma had boxed his ears without due cause in the morning, and he had hardly spoken since.

"Why, sonny!" she said, sweetly, "seems to me you are very late to-night. You have n't been to school all this time, have you?"

Walter said "No," briefly; and without moving a kindly muscle of his face to show that his griefs were forgotten or forgiven, took down a blue frock that hung over the wood-box and put it on, and went out and brought in great armfuls of wood for the evening fires. His task ended, he took off his frock and hung it up again. Then he looked across the kitchen stove at Frank playing with the dog in the corner, and said:—

"See here, boy! Have you fed the pigs?"

"No," said Frank.

"That's your business," said Walter. "It's rather late in the day to hear them squeal."

"Yes, Frankie dear," said Mrs. Fenway, pleased to hear the silent one speak again, and almost foolishly eager to conciliate him. "Walter is right. Run and feed the pigs; that's a good boy!"

"Darn the pigs!" said Frank, going reluctantly. "I don't see why I should feed 'em; I don't eat pork. Come, Franco; you must help."

Cheered by the prospects of the dog's pleasant company and powerful assistance, he went out; while Walter, exchanging his boots for a pair of old slippers, took a book and a slate, and proceeded to study to-morrow's arithmetic lesson by the sitting-room fire.

And now Mr. Fenway, coming to the house by the back way, found Frank with a pail of swill on his sled, which he was trying to make Franco draw by the sled-rope tied to his collar. "Get up! whoa! gee!" he was saying; and the swill was slopping at every start and hitch.

"Frank, take up that pail and carry it," said his father.

"I can't; it's so full," said Frank ashamed, beginning to unfasten the dog.

"Then take half the quantity, and go twice."

"Yes, sir," said Frank cheerfully; that firm, kind tone of command effecting more with him than all his mother's fitful blustering and teasing.

Supper was now ready. Frank came in from feeding the swine, and submitted to the necessity of washing his hands a second time, much to his disgust.

"That makes twice I've washed 'em! I won't wash 'em at all to-morrow, to pay up for it!" he said to himself.

Mrs. Fenway tinkled the tea-bell in her sharp way,—she had a quick, sharp way of doing almost everything,—and her tall husband, having slipped his feet into a pair of old shoes, and his powerful spare arms into a comfortable house coat, took his seat at the table; his well-grizzled locks wetted by recent washing and freshly brushed back from his forehead, and his open shirt-collar exposing the hardy working-man's sinewy and hairy neck.

Frank, at a look from his father, got off the dog's back

and hopped up into his chair. Then Marian appeared, oh, so lovely! with fair, sweet face, of complexion clear pink-and-white, as her mother boasted, and with hands that had never been reddened by housework, very sure. And Walter stalked to his place.

CHAPTER VII.

MRS. FENWAY'S TEA.

MR. FENWAY waited for Nance to stop rattling the milk-pail she was taking from the pantry as she started to milk the cow. There was a moment's serious pause,—only Frank reaching slyly around and playing with Franco's nose behind his chair; then Mr. Fenway said, in a deep, earnest voice, his simple grace.

Almost before the brief prayer was ended and his face lifted again, smart Mrs. Fenway commenced rattling the teacups and pouring the tea. Mr. Fenway looked for his knife, then glanced around the table; the risible muscles of his mouth began to draw and pucker, as he remarked dryly,—

“Are we expected to eat anything, wife, or is this only show-bread?”

“I don't know what we take the trouble of getting supper for—and it's no small trouble, I assure you—if it ain't to be eaten,” said Mrs. Fenway, somewhat tartly; for she had not yet learned, and probably never would learn, how to take her husband's jokes.

“Then it strikes me,” he said, like one whose darkly struggling mind had just been visited by a cheering ray, “that knives will be useful.”

“Knives? Why, how absurd!” And the little woman bridled, tossed, and simpered. “That stupid Nance! she never can set the table without forgetting something.” It was well just then for stupid Nance that her small black ears were not within sweep of the vigorous little arm. “You sit

still, Marian! Walter —” But the older son's long face did not encourage the asking of favors, and she turned to the younger. “Frankie dear, come, you step and get the knives; they're right at the right hand, on the buttery shelf. That's a good boy.”

“Tain't boys' work to set the table,” muttered Frank.

But, catching his father's eye, he went and brought the knives, giving his own to Franco to carry, and recovering it from him only after a lively scuffle.

Mrs. Fenway had an amiable habit of atoning for her faults of temper by bestowing extraordinary attentions on those whom she had happened to offend. “When I see my little woman over-particular to please,” Miles Fenway used to say, “then I know there's been a thunder-storm; and by watching at the table to see which plate the nicest tidbits go to, I can always tell where the lightning has struck. Sometimes they come to me; then I often have to stop and think when and where I got a stroke; but the tidbits don't lie, and I'm sure to remember some playful little circumstance of the morning, such as her brushing the coat on my back with the house-broom rather harder than seemed to me altogether necessary, or combing my hair and whiskers with her fingers, when I could n't for the life of me see that they needed combing.”

This evening madam appeared especially anxious that Walter should be well served, making haste to secure the nicest morsels for the morose young fellow's plate. It thus happened that she neglected to give her husband his cup of tea. He waited for it awhile, then remarked, with the humorous drawing of the risible muscles which was characteristic of him:—

“I should like to know what I've done that I can't have something to drink.”

“Dear me! did n't I give you — I certainly — how absurd!”

And the impulsive creature, to atone for the delay, gave

him his tea with extraordinary quickness, and very much too strong and too sweet.

"You're altogether too good now!" He stirred and sipped, and passed the cup back for a dash of hot water. "Whenever you forget my cup, wife," he went on, with a twinkle of his clear gray eye, "I think of poor old Gonumzkie, the first summer he boarded with us and worked in the shop. He came to me one day and said, 'Mizter Fenway, I am much dissatisfy, and I tink I shall better quit.' 'How so?' I said, 'have n't I kept my agreement with you? Don't we treat you well?' 'Yez, Mizter Fenway, I have no fault to make vit you, but your wife sometime treat me wery, wery pad.' 'I'm very sorry for that, Gonumzkie!' I didn't know but one of those little mistakes had happened, which, according to my experience, are liable to occur in the best-regulated families, and that a clothes-brush, or pot-lid, or something of the sort, had got out of place, and crossed the room when he happened to be passing. 'What has she done,' I said, 'that makes you want to quit?' 'Vell, Mizter Fenway, I vill tell you!' says he, so full of passion that he almost choked; 'sometime she gimme no cuppy tea, no cuppy coffee, for breakfas', for supper, and I go vidout him.' 'I declare,' I said, 'that's too bad; she treats me sometimes just so. Often I don't get my tea till I ask for it; I've had a notion of quitting myself; suppose we quit together!' The old man went back to his work, and after that always asked for his 'cuppy coffee, cuppy tea,' when he wanted them."

Even Walter had to grin at his father's imitation of the old Polish exile's comical brogue; and the family were all now in pretty good spirits. The young man's ill-humor succumbed still more to a wonderfully broad piece of pie his mother slipped on his plate, whereat she smiled, delighted; and, thinking it a good time to tell about Mr. Daskill, she made Marian relate her adventure.

This the girl did circumstantially, not omitting to mention the gentleman's dream of a flock of fanning-mills, suggested by the trip-hammers.

Miles Fenway had the shrewdness to see which way the secret matrimonial hopes of his wife, and perhaps, also, of Marian herself, were pointing, and he was not well pleased. He waited until the boys had left the table, then said:—

"I've no doubt this Mr. Daskill is a respectable man, and I don't care how many such acquaintances you make, Marian, provided you treat them properly."

"The idea!" cried Mrs. Fenway. "I hope you don't think her capable of treating any one improperly!"

"Perhaps improperly is n't just the word. But I've hinted to her before that I don't like the way she uses some of her friends. I'm afraid, in the first place, that she gives too much time and thought to the society of gentlemen; and that does n't help her along with her studies, I am sure. But more than that, I suspect she is n't dealing quite fairly with some I could mention."

Marian colored slightly, and cast down her eyes. Her mother colored violently, and fixed her eyes, snapping and flashing, on her imperturbable consort.

"Miles Fenway," she said, with a toss of her arrogant little chin, "how absurd you are! I can't imagine who you mean."

"Marian can. I'll say William Rayburn, for one. It is easy to see how he feels towards her. I believe her treatment of him is actually wearing upon him, and doing him an injury."

Miles Fenway bent his serious and tender eyes on his child, who began to tremble and draw quick breaths under his reproach.

"The idea!" said Mrs. Fenway. "Because a young man's stomach is out of order, or his liver is torpid, and all he wants is a good dose of salts or a blue pill! How absurd!" And

shoving her chair back from the table, she took a belligerent little pinch of snuff.

"It will take something besides salts or a blue pill to reach his case. If she could find out her own mind with regard to him, and then hold to it, that would be the first step towards ending his trouble. If she don't mean to encourage him, let her simply say so; and though it will be a hard stroke, it will really be the kindest thing she can do. He will stop worrying about her then, and in a little while he will turn his mind to some other girl, who will be much obliged to her for having refused him; for I believe, if he could get over this foolish notion after Marian, he might take his pick among all the girls in town."

Her father's earnest words called up Will's image in all its strength to Marian's ardent but too fickle mind; and the hint of his choosing elsewhere gave her a jealous pang.

"He says himself he thinks I am too young to marry," she said, with gathering tears.

"That shows his good sense. Don't in return tantalize him to death with your coquettish ways, — coaxing him back to you after you have slighted him, and then, when he comes, managing to have two or three other beaux in his way, flirting with them half the evening, as I've seen you do, till he goes off angry, or joins in, trying to laugh and talk as if he was happy, but all the while wishing himself dead."

"It shan't be so any more!" said Marian, beginning to cry.

Her father calmly extended his cup for more tea, and that brought madam back to the table, after her pinch of snuff.

"I should like to know what you are driving at, Miles Fenway!" And she tipped the teapot so sharply that the lid flew off and clattered into the teacup. "You would n't have her think of marrying a fellow like Will Rayburn, would you? The idea!"

"Why, no, — not unless she wants to."

"A common clerk in a country store!"

"What was I when you married me, Mrs. Fenway? I was a common mechanic."

"The case is very different. Will Rayburn is not a religious man; that is my great objection to him."

"I suspect, my dear, if he had fifty thousand dollars, that objection would grow beautifully less."

"It's a matter of principle with me," Mrs. Fenway asserted, very much as if it had been a matter of passion, "and you know it."

"You did n't make it so much a matter of principle when you married me. I was no more a religious man than he is." Miles Fenway's mouth puckered ever so slightly as he added: "There's nothing like a sweet and amiable Christian wife to bring a man around to right ways of thinking and living."

"The case is entirely different, I tell you; and I do think it is cruel in you to talk to the poor child in this way and make her cry. There's your tea; do take it!" And the little Xantippe looked very much as if she would like to throw it.

Socrates quietly took the cup, gently put it down, and stirred its contents. Marian rose abruptly from the table, and was hastening from the room.

"Mind! I don't counsel you to engage yourself to him, my child. Only promise me one thing,—that you will be sincere with him."

"I will be sincere with him! father, I will!"

"I think you will, my child."

His big, strong hand, light in its touch of affection as her own, caressed her beautiful head. He kissed her cheek, while a tear glistened on his own; and she went sobbing from the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OLD-FASHIONED WINTER EVENING.

"THIS is pretty well!" said little Mrs. Fenway, holding the teapot cover in her hand, with an expression which prepared her husband to dodge or parry; for such unconsidered trifles had been known to traverse the table in a highly irregular manner, from her side to his, more than once in the five-and-twenty years of her sober wedded life.

"I am glad it is pretty well," responded Miles Fenway, composedly drinking his tea, but keeping a shrewd eye on the cover.

"After all I've done for that child, to have you interfere and force her into a low marriage with that Rayburn fellow!"

"Was yours a low marriage with that Fenway fellow? I wish nobody in the house had any more notion of forcing her inclination than I have. She would do well enough without quite so much parental management. By George!" said Miles, still good-naturedly but very decidedly, "if you throw that cover, I'll shut you up in the closet!" Mrs. Fenway put the cover down. "Will is coming here this evening; that is the reason why I spoke to her just now."

"This evening? How do you know?"

Marian, in the conference with her mother, had lacked the courage to tell her that.

"I met him on the street. He was looking brighter and more hopeful than I have seen him for a long time. She has been after him lately, I'm certain: she can't let him go, and he's a fellow of too much pride to come round again of his

own accord. I remarked that it was some time since we had seen him; and he answered, with a laugh and a blush, that I might possibly see him to-night."

"Parental management, indeed!" said the wrathful lady. "It will do for you to talk of parental management, after that!"

"Do you think it looked as though I wanted to bring him and Marian together? I never thought of such a thing. All I demand is, that he shall have fair play." And without stopping to argue the question further, Miles retired to the sitting-room fire and his weekly newspaper.

"Well!" said the little lady, bouncing up. "Coming to-night, is he? I declare, there shall be no fire in the parlor, nor in the kitchen either. Nance," to the black girl bringing in her pail of milk, "let the fire go out in the stove."

"You cuffed me last night 'cause I let it go out," replied Nance, shyly turning up the whites of her eyes.

"And I'll cuff you to-night, if you don't."

"You're in a hard place, Nance," said Mr. Fenway, coming in on a hunt for his spectacles. "Wife, you remind me of the old toper, going home late one night in his usual condition, muttering to himself, 'I wonder if my wife has kept supper waiting! I'll lick her if she has, and I'll lick her if she has n't.' Look out!" seeing the broom coming, with an excited woman behind it. "Remember the closet!"

Perceiving that her husband was not in a mood to be trifled with, Mrs. Fenway returned the broom to its place, and took her little pinch of snuff.

"He may talk! But there shall be no fire in any room but the sitting-room, and I'll sit up all night but what I'll prevent that fellow from having a word with her alone."

With this resolution, Mrs. Fenway hurried up stairs to comfort and counsel her child. She found her indulging in that luxury of the afflicted female heart, "a good cry." But Mar-

ian dried her eyes, and, to escape her mother's urgent advice and entreaties, declared that she must practise an hour before writing her French exercises; and so went down to the piano.

Nervous and apprehensive, Mrs. Fenway followed, seating herself at her sewing, and awaited Will's arrival, like a determined little general prepared for an arduous campaign.

Evening had set in. The lamps were lighted, and the generous wood fire shed a ruddy glow throughout the room. Marian's white fingers danced over the ivory keys. Mrs. Fenway's chubby red fingers flew with the busy needle and thread, as they flew only on occasions of domestic excitement. On the other side of the table sat Miles Fenway, with his newspaper before him, and his feet stretched out towards the fire, showing a formidable length of leg. Frank had gone out with Franco; but Walter was there, bent over his slate, behind his father. The firebrands crackled and snapped, the flames fluttered and lisped; and between the strains of Marian's music were heard the travelling slate-pencil, and the purring of the cat on the rug.

Then black Nance, having dutifully washed the dishes and let the kitchen fire go out, clattered into the room in her thick shoes, that had been Walter's, took a chair in the corner, perched with her feet upon the top round and her knees near her chin, knitting-work in lap, and knit, and rolled her eyes, and sunned her sensuous, happy, tropical nature in the glow of the great chimney.

Marian started and Mrs. Fenway looked up, thinking Will was at the door. But it was nobody but Lottie, the elder daughter, now Mrs. Lorkins (having thrown herself away on a pedler of that name), coming in with a shawl over her head, from beneath which beamed a countenance full of homely cheerfulness and goodness.

"Just in time, Lottie!" cried her mother. "I was wishing you would come in."

She was, in fact, wishing for anybody to come in, whose presence might help to embarrass Will Rayburn's wooing.

"I thought I *must* run in for a few minutes," said Lottie, slipping off her shawl. "Pa, have you heard from Geordie?" (Geordie was the pedler.) "I expected him to-night."

"Well!" said her father, slipping the spectacles up on his forehead and laying down the newspaper, "Geordie is n't the fellow to be far away on runners when there's a chance of losing the sleighing."

"Dear me!" said Lottie, "I wish I was n't so foolish; but whenever he's a day longer getting home than I think he ought to be, all the stories I ever heard or read, of pedlers being waylaid and murdered for their money, come into my mind, and make me as nervous as a witch."

"Oh! Geordie likes to have a good time with some of his old girls," said Mrs. Fenway. "These pedlers are great fellows for the girls."

"I believe, ma," said Lottie, "I never came in here yet when I didn't hear something interesting about pedlers. I've often wondered what you would think of, to say next. Geordie's flirting with the girls is the last thing!"

"Oh! is it?" said Mrs. Fenway sarcastically. "You're so bumptious about it, I've a good mind to tell you—I will! Your pa was n't going to mention that we've heard from your pedler, but we have, and very interesting news it is too. Bob Syles came home to-day, and told all round that he saw Geordie Lorkins put up at a tavern last night, bringing along a woman he had picked up somewhere."

"It's a slander!" said Lottie indignantly.

"I've no doubt but it is," said her father, "and for that reason I was n't going to say anything about it."

"Well, I hope it is," said Mrs. Fenway. "Bob Syles's word ain't good for much, I know. What work is that you've brought? Another baby frock! I hope your baby

has frocks enough! But I suppose pedlers' babies are entitled to more frocks than other folks's."

"My pedler's baby is entitled to all the frocks she needs, and that I can afford to make for her without other people's help."

Lottie, having fired this little shot, quietly unrolled her work before the fire. Nobody spoke. She looked at Walter.

"What is the matter with you all to-night?"

Mrs. Fenway made a sign of silence, and whispered, —
"He's having one of his grouchy spells, that's all."

But that hardly accounted for the domestic cloud which Lottie had felt immediately on entering the house.

It lifted for a moment; then at a sound from without, settled down again. Marian turned on the piano-stool, and began to finger the keys carelessly. Mrs. Fenway's relaxed lips tightened once more, as if in expectation of a struggle. Lottie looked from one to the other, then at her father, who smiled.

Somebody was rasping the snow from a stout pair of boot-soles on the ringing iron door-scraper. Then somebody lifted the latch without knocking, and came in.

"Nance," said Mrs. Fenway crankly, "open the entry door, so they can see."

Down went the black girl's feet, and up jumped she in her clattering shoes, running with her knitting-work, and followed by a streaming thread of yarn and a rolling ball, which was in turn followed by the cat, cuffing and boxing it in sport, much as Mrs. Fenway had often, at odd spells, cuffed and boxed in earnest the larger and darker ball of the girl's woolly head.

Mrs. Fenway looked up superciliously, and Marian turned on the piano-stool with a smile, prepared for the expected suitor, and saw — not him, but an oldish little man, with small, beady black eyes that winked pleasantly at the firelight, and

a tall, sour-faced female, distinguished for her singular flatness and gauntness of figure, and chronic scowl.

"Good evenin', folks!" said the little man, all smiles, rubbing his husky hands.

"I declare," exclaimed Mrs. Fenway, with a joyful change of countenance, "how glad I am to see you! Lay your things right off, Mrs. Wetherspun. You've come for a long evening, I hope!"

For the good woman said to herself: "That Rayburn fellow won't have much of a chance with them around; and they beat all the human creatures to stay, when they once get to toasting their shins by the fire."

"I don't know. Shall we, daddy?" said Mrs. Wetherspun doubtfully.

"I'm gunter slip off my gre't-cut, anyway, while we do stop," said Mr. Wetherspun. "Me'n' my wife thought we'd jest step in, and see how ye all be; she wanted to git out."

"I guess 'twas quite as much you as me," said Mrs. Wetherspun, untying her bonnet-strings. "You spoke on't fust."

"Wull, it's kin' o' lonesome to hum, now the girls have got married off. I git to sleep in the corner, 'thout somebody comes in to roust me up. I tol' my wife, though, she need n't bring her knittin,' for we should n't stop. But I believe she did."

"I should n't think o' goin' anywheres with him, 'ithout takin' *some* kind o' work along," rejoined the scowling female, appearing gaunter and flatter than ever after the removal of her shawl. "He's sich a master hand to hang on, when he once gits to talkin'!"

"I'll make him hang on to-night!" thought Mrs. Fenway, taking the lady's things.

The little man stepped to lay his overcoat across a chair,

and nearly stumbled over black Nance, who was groping mysteriously on the floor.

"It'll do fer women-folks to sputter about men hangin' on, won't it, Fenway? Me'n' my wife — Hurt ye, Nance? — never set out to see which could talk t'other down, on a long stretch; but I've gen'ly found, away f'm hum, 't her tongue can run about as fast an' about as long as anybody's, 'thout windin' up!" The little black eyes sparkled with anticipation of the winter evening's entertainment. "Hey, what's this?" As he was about to take a chair by the fire, he stopped, turned round, looked at his legs, and began to lift them warily. "I'm beat if I ain't gittin' wound up in suthin'! Has your ball got out o' yer pocket, mammy?"

"I declare, that's your yarn, Nance!" said Mrs. Fenway. "We're all wound up in't."

"I was tryin' to unwind ye," said Nance.

"I thought it curi's," said Mr. Wetherspun. "She was dartin' back an' forth 'twixt my legs, like a shuttle."

"I knowed my ball was all right," said Mrs. Wetherspun, having explored her pocket.

"Wull, ye don't alluz know," remarked her husband, disentangling himself, and sitting down. "Me'n' my wife got started one night to go over the bridge, an' call on the minister's folks —"

"Come now, daddy," the lady interrupted him, unfolding her knitting-work, "don't tell that silly story agin! I'm sick an' tired o' hearin' on't! Go right on with your practice, Marian; it won't trouble us the leastest mite. We can visit jest the same."

"If it's silly, 't ain't my fault," Mr. Wetherspun resumed. "She took her knittin' along as usual; I believe she'd take that if she was goin' to the moon! Wull, arter we got to the minister's, an' was jest takin' off our things, — for they axed us to, an' my wife had agreed we should stay if they

urged it, — wull, jest then I kin' o' noticed there was purty consider'ble loose yarn layin' around, an' nobody seemed to be able to 'count for 't; minister's wife said she did n't have no knittin'; an' my wife, she had n't took hern out; till bimeby I ketched hold of a piece o' yarn hangin' to her gownd, an' follered it right up to her pocket. Wull, she put in her hand, an' there was the knittin'-work, only the ball was gone; she 'd lost it out a-gittin' at her pocket-hankercher jest as we left hum, an' I found it, dark as 'twas, by follerin' the yarn back from the minister's, over the bridge, to within about six rods of our gate, where the ball had unwound to a lump no bigger 'n a wa'nut, with a goose-quill through it. I tol' the folks, when I got back, 't my wife 'd been reelin' street-yarn that night, if never afore!"

Although everybody present had heard this neat domestic anecdote on several previous occasions, everybody laughed except Mrs. Wetherspun, who scowled more sourly than ever.

The company were now comfortably seated. Marian had resumed her practice. The men were talking about the weather, and the women's tongues and fingers were beginning to fly pretty fast, when once more there came a step to the door, and the noise of a foot knocking off ice-balls on the scraper.

"Go to the door, Nance," said Mrs. Fenway.

But before the girl could get her feet down from their perch, and her yarn and needles out of her lap, the visitor walked in.

Again it was not Will, but Will's uncle, miserly old Mr. Carolus. Uncle and nephew were not on good terms; and lively little Mrs. Fenway welcomed him accordingly.

The visitor hesitated, however, standing in the entry doorway, — a grotesque figure, with sharp eyes, and a wizened old face peering out from the huge fur collar of a long, old-fash-

ioned cloak, that reached to his heels, and made him look like a hunchback in a giant's mantle. With one hand thrust out from under the garment, leaning on his cane, and with his head pushed curiously forward, under a heavy fur cap, he glanced keenly from right to left, and said, in a harsh, cracked voice, —

“I see you have friends with you. My room will be better than my company. I'll call again.”

“No, no, Mr. Carolus!” said Miles, gathering up his long legs, and advancing to take the cap and cloak.

“The more the merrier!” cried gay Mrs. Fenway.

“Ye need n't be afraid of us, Mr. Carolus,” said Mr. Wetherspun, getting into the corner by the hearth; while the scowling Mrs. Wetherspun whispered in Lottie's ear:

“The old miser goes out to pass his evenin's fer no other reason under the canopy but jest to save firewood to hum.”

“Besides,” said Mr. Fenway, “you'll hardly ever find us without company on a winter's evening. I read my papers, and then I like to have neighbors drop in and have a chat.”

So saying, he lifted hat and cloak, somewhat after the manner of a necromancer lifting his magic cloth, and discovered a short, bald, nervous, skinny and wrinkled octogenarian, not so tall as little Wetherspun by a head, but lively as a cricket.

“You keep good fires, Neighbor Fenway! I like to see good fires!” he croaked, nodding and shaking. And, springing his legs as if they had been worked by wires, he advanced to the space that had been opened for him before the hearth.

“He likes good fires anywheres but to hum,” whispered Mrs. Wetherspun, appearing to regard the new-comer as an intruder. “Go into his house in the coldest weather, and you'll find him shiverin' over a fire of two sticks.”

"Walter," said Mr. Fenway, "go to the cellar, and bring up a pitcher of cider and a dish of apples. You can hold the lamp for him, Nance."

"Ha! I don't object to a class of cider!" And old Mr. Carolus nodded and smacked. "Ha! I don't object to an apple neither, only give me a knife to scrape it. I'm seventy-nine year old, in my eightieth year, Neighbor Fenway, and I can drink my glass of cider and eat an apple yet."

"Ye never see neither in his house," whispered the scowling Mrs. Wetherspun.

The well-filled fruit-dish and pitcher were brought, and placed on the hearth to warm, at sight of which old Carolus nodded and cackled, and sociable little Wetherspun's heart overflowed, in anticipation of the promised cheer.

Still Will Rayburn did not come, and Marian appeared abstracted and anxious. She was listening intently, while she seemed to be playing; and when at last another step—this time a quick, manly step—came to the door, she no longer waited at the piano, but rose with a radiant look, which Mrs. Fenway bit her lip to see, motioned Nance back to her chair, and went herself to answer the visitor's knock.

The entry was usually lighted in the evening through the open door of the sitting-room, which Marian now closed after her, determined that no eyes should witness the meeting with her lover. She advanced through the dim entry, her heart all a-flutter with joy and sweet compassion, lifted the outer latch, opened the door, put out her hand, and put up her precious mouth, but recoiled in time to avoid a kiss from strange and bearded lips.

Wide-awake Mrs. Fenway, perceiving her daughter's little artifice, flew to the sitting-room door, flung it open, saying, "Don't keep people in the dark!" and, letting a flood of light into the entry, beheld Marian starting back, with a faint scream, from the advance of a stranger.

Alas, it was a day of fatal errors with the poor child! To have mistaken another person's dog for their own that afternoon was nothing to this terrible blunder.

Innocent, happy Marian, hastening to meet Will, and give him the sacred kiss of affection and acceptance, had almost had it taken from her lips by the too ready, too ardent Mr. Adolphus Daskill.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW MR. DASKILL WAS ENTERTAINED.

MRS. FENWAY was completely flustered by the appearance of so distinguished a stranger, and her uncertain and confused knowledge of the impropriety into which Marian had so nearly betrayed herself.

"I beg a thousand pardons!" said Mr. Daskill, with his hat high and his head low. "I should have known that such a greeting was not intended for me. But really, madam, your daughter,—for I presume you are her mother,—"

"I am, sir," said Mrs. Fenway excitedly.

"Mr. Daskill, mother," Marian then found breath to say.

Mrs. Fenway courtesied, and Mr. Adolphus bowed again, with captivating urbanity.

"Your daughter, I was about to remark, reminds me of a sister I lost two years ago; they are wonderfully alike. And she was no doubt expecting a brother, or some dear friend."

Marian was blushing with confusion, when her mother came, with a white lie, to her relief.

"Yes, she was looking for a brother, sir. A very dear friend, sir. For when I say brother, I mean brother-in-law,—my son-in-law,—whom we are expecting this very night. She mistook you for him; I beg you'll excuse her."

"It is too great a happiness to be mistaken for your son-in-law, madam," replied the audacious Mr. Daskill. "I fear my visit is ill-timed; but I promised Miss Fenway that, with her permission, I would give myself the pleasure of calling on her before I left town; and as I have decided to go in the morning, only this opportunity remained for me."

"Walk in, sir," then said Mrs. Fenway, showing the way to the sitting-room, but starting back at sight of the company she had for a moment forgotten.

There was coarse Mrs. Wetherspun, scowling over her knitting, simple Mr. Wetherspun, tipped back against the chimney, and grotesque old Mr. Carolus, bent almost double, having slipped down in his chair until he sat on his backbone, with one little lean leg crossed over the other little lean leg, and with his bald head pushed forward, glistening in the firelight.

"Dear me!" said the vain little woman, ashamed to introduce the high-bred Adolphus to such neighbors, "why was n't there a fire in the parlor, Marian? We nearly always have a fire in the—but to-night, for a wonder—how did it happen?"

There was no other way, however, but to show the visitor in, which she did in the hope that the others would soon take a hint and depart. She did not intend introducing him to anybody but Mr. Fenway and Lottie; but she had barely simpered forth a repetition of her little fiction, "To think, Lottie, Marian mistook him for your husband! The idea!" when Mr. Fenway, having shaken him cordially by the hand, introduced him to the rest.

"Go to bed!" muttered Mrs. Fenway, venting her wrath on Nance, whose convenient wool got a sharp wrench behind Mr. Daskill's back. "Sitting here with your knees higher than your head!"

"Hain't nowheres else to set," muttered Nance in reply. "You made me let the fire go out in the —"

"Out of my sight with you!" And one of the girl's unlucky ears received such a tweak as wrung from her a half-suppressed yell. ("It must appear so ungentleel," thought Mrs. Fenway, "for a black servant-girl to be seen sitting with the family.")

"Shan't we be goin', mammy?" feebly suggested Mr. Wetherspun, to Mrs. Fenway's inexpressible relief.

Mrs. Wetherspun scowled at the apples and cider, and scowled at her husband and the newly arrived guest; then said sourly, —

"I s'pose mebbe we better."

"No, no! sit still," said Mr. Fenway. (So absurd! What could he be thinking of? as Mrs. Fenway aptly remarked in the course of a subsequent curtain lecture.)

"I'll jest knit this needle out," said Mrs. Wetherspun.

"That'll jest about give me time to drink a glass of cider," observed her husband.

Mr. Daskill was delighted to see everybody, especially the proprietor of the famous fork-factory.

"Your forks have a great name in Buffalo, Mr. Fenway. I trust we shall be better acquainted. Our firm—Goldfinch and Company—has now a large interest in your town, and I shall probably give it my personal attention. The place has a great attraction for me." And he cast a gracious glance at the blushing Marian.

Mrs. Fenway heard and saw, and in the joy which thrilled her fond maternal heart, took a tranquillizing pinch of snuff.

Her pleasure was immediately marred by old Mr. Carolus, who squeaked out emphatically, with nods and shakes of his ridiculous, shiny, bald head:—

"I would n't give a tinker's dam for the business, without I could sell whiskey. I used to keep store on that very spot, 'fore Ward Farnell's day. I came when the country was a wilderness; started the first store in the place; sold everything, from a calico dress to a clothespin, and I ain't ashamed to say the chief source of my profits was in the liquor traffic, — the liquor traffic, sir! I sold to Indians, I sold to squaws, and I sold to white men. I sold by the glass, and I sold by the bottle, and I sold by the kag. I made a little by

the kag, and I made a good deal by the bottle, and I made a sight by the glass. I made five hundred per cent, if I made a penny."

"Yes," said Mr. Fenway, "I know many a man, Mr. Carolus, who passed his farm and stock over your counter, and went off with nothing to show for 'em but rags and a red nose."

"That they did, that they did! 'T was their fault, not mine. They took my liquor, and I took their farms. First, a small account at the store, then a long account, then a little mortgage, then a big mortgage, then foreclosure; and the house and land had passed out of a fool's hands into a wise man's. I kept the farms; and whether they kept the red noses, I don't care a tinker's dam, he, he! It's none of my business, none of my business, he, he!"

Poor Mrs. Fenway, wondering what Mr. Adolphus Daskill would think of them for having such guests in their house, attempted to interpose; but old Carolus, catching up his cane, struck it rudely on the hearth, and squeaked out:—

"Sell it by the kag, Mr. What's-yer-name! sell it by the bottle, Mr. What's-yer-name! and, above all,"—he raised his cracked voice to a horribly dissonant pitch, and struck again,— "sell it by the glass! Never mind what some folks say, as long as other folks buy. That's my advice to you, if you carry on the business. You'll get cusses, but you'll get coppers. Cusses don't hurt; coppers count."

"What made you ever stop selling, Mr. Carolus?" Mr. Wetherspun inquired.

"Because I was a fool. One grocery after another opened fire; here sprung up a grogshop, and there a grogshop, like toadstools in a night; and a tavern on the corner. Then some said they would n't come into my store and trade at all, if I sold rum, and in a moment of weakness, in a moment of weakness, Mr. What's-yer-name, I succumbed, and quit the

traffic. The business wan't worth a tinker's granny after that, and I was mighty glad to sell out."

"We all thought Mr. Farnell was doin' perty well with the business for a while," said little Wetherspun.

"You thought so, he, he!" cackled old Carolus. "I could have told ye, I could have told ye! But ye found out your mistake."

"We found out our mistake to our sorrow!" said Mrs. Wetherspun. "Think of a man like Ward Farnell cuttin' sich a big swath, and then failin' up, and payin' poor folks he'd borrered money from only 'leven cents on a dollar! For that's all we're likely to git, though Julia says she means to pay some on us. If she means to, why don't she? She's paid the Widder Rayburn and the Wintergreen gals suthin'; but that don't do us no good. The hussy!"

Marian hastened to the defence of her friend.

"I suppose Julia thought they needed what she could spare now more than you do, Mrs. Wetherspun. I know she had to sell her jewels, to be able to pay them anything. Not many girls would have done that! Since the failure, she has acted in every way, everybody says, with the greatest courage and unselfishness; and I can't bear to hear her spoken ill of."

"That's right! that's right!" said Mr. Daskill quietly, but with beaming admiration in his eyes.

Mrs. Fenway was overjoyed; but now little Wetherspun, wishing to bring the conversation back to the subject which interested him more, struck in from his corner:—

"You sold out with a perty good pocketful, did n't ye, Mr. Carolus?"

"I did, I did! My aim was to make money, and I made money."

"That's been the aim of your life, hain't it?" said Mrs. Wetherspun sourly.

"It's the aim of every man's life," said Mr. Carolus. "But there's a difference. Only one man in ten thousand is honest enough to own it. T'other nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine put their thumbs together, turn up their eyes, and look pious, and say: 'Oh, no! we don't live to make money!' Oh, no! *they* live for the good of society, or some other d——d humbug; to save their souls, when they've no souls to save; and all the while, what do they do? Just what I do; they get all the money they can. I tell ye what, Mr. What's-ye-name, money rules the world. Mr. What's-ye-name, you know that as well as I do. The world knows it, and acts accordingly. What a man Ward Farnell was, when folks thought *he* had money! They fairly worshipped him. They'll worship you, Mr. What's-ye-name, if you take his place, and make a big show, and humbug 'em enough. Look at me! I don't make a show. I don't humbug. I'm a cynical old sinner, and some folks would like to kick me out of their houses, but they don't. They like to have me come into their houses. Know why, Mr. What's-ye-name? 'Cause I've got money, and they know it."

Down came the emphasizing cane on the hearth. Mrs. Fenway was "mortified to death," while Mr. Fenway sat by and laughed, like a great goose, so absurd! as she duly informed him in the course of the aforesaid curtain lecture.

"Come, Lottie," she whispered, "le's pass round the apples, or we never shall stop their mouths, or get rid of 'em. You step and get the tumblers, and some knives and plates."

Ever since her marriage, Lottie could scarcely enter her father's house without being called upon to perform some domestic service, while Marian played the lady; and she now obeyed, as a matter of course. On the arrival of the glasses, the little woman nudged her husband impatiently.

"Come, Mr. Fenway, ain't you going to give the company any cider to-night?"

At the same time she had a secret misgiving that Mr. Daskill would look upon cider as vulgar.

"Fenway alluz treats his comp'ny perty well," remarked Mr. Wetherspun, as Miles took up the pitcher. "My wife often says to me when we're goin' out of an evenin', 'If there's no pa'tic'lar place ye care to go to,' says she, 's'pose ye jest look into Fenway's,' says she; 'we'll git treated about as well there as anywheres,' says she; an' it's about so."

"I don't think I ever made sich a remark in my life!" retorted Mrs. Wetherspun. "*You* may have said it, for it's you, I'm sure, that drinks the cider."

"You like a glass of cider jest as well as I do; now I'll leave it to the folks if ye don't. I'll leave it to you, Mis' Fenway, if my wife don't appear to take hern with about as good a relish as the rest on us."

"I'm sure," said Mrs. Fenway, restraining her temper only out of respect for Mr. Daskill, "you're both welcome to a glass. It's a very small matter, hardly worth making so much talk about," she added tartly, in spite of herself.

"Try a glass, Mr. Daskill," said Miles Fenway. "I never offer my guests anything stronger, nor take anything stronger myself. But I've a notion that a glass of cider does me good; it corrects a bilious habit I am subject to."

"Thank you," said Mr. Daskill, receiving a glass and holding it up to the light. "That's handsome! Here's to the prosperity of the fork-factory!"

"Thank you," said Miles, standing before the fireplace. "Allow me to propose the new branch house of Goldfinch and Company."

Mr. Daskill smiled, nodding also to Marian and her mother, as he drank.

"I don't see how anybody *can* like the taste on't! Ugh!" said Mrs. Wetherspun, with a remarkably wry face even for her, after a deep sip.

"Don't drink it for compliment's sake, I beg!" said Mrs. Fenway.

"Oh, I don't," replied Mrs. Wetherspun resignedly. "I think it doos me good."

In which way of thinking, that exemplary female had the resolution to force upon herself the contents of her first glass, and also of a second, in the course of the evening.

"Mr. Fenway believes in the old-time institutions," observed Mr. Wetherspun, blinking and happy, as he sat tipped back in his corner, with his glass between his knees. "His house alluz reminds me of twenty or thirty year ago. We alluz used to have apples an' cider on the hath, 'fore stoves come instid o' fireplaces, an' cider kin' o' went out o' fashion arter these new-fangled temperance notions got around."

"Temperance the granny!" snarled old Carolus contemptuously; and you should have seen him nod and grimace at the glass held tremblingly in his palsied hand. "They may preach till all 's blue, I'll drink my glass o' cider." And he spilled a stream all the way up his waistcoat, as he carried the glass to his lips.

"You don't often see sich roustin' fires as Mr. Fenway keeps," said Mr. Wetherspun, blinking over his cider at Mr. Daskill.

"Fireplaces have gone out of fashion, except that we see now and then a little grate full of coal," replied Mr. Daskill, with beautiful condescension.

"I notice that furnaces are getting to be all the rage in some places," said Mr. Fenway. "They put what I call the cheerfulest feature of our old-fashioned housekeeping away out of sight in the cellar. And going into some of your fine houses, I can't help thinking that modern polite society serves some of the liveliest and most picturesque traits of human nature in the same way. Our hearty, healthy native impulses are covered up, and instead of the open flash

and sparkle, you get a hot breath, as from the infernal regions!"

"That is true of a certain so-called refined society," replied Mr. Daskill, with the air of a man who knew the best. "Where refinement is merely an affectation, society is no doubt all the more corrupt inwardly for the outward restraints and disguises it puts on. But true culture brings out what is most interesting in the individual, — polishes the human diamond, instead of destroying its brilliancy."

Ah, what an elegant, what an altogether superior man he was! sitting there, the centre of the circle, so entirely at his ease, and speaking so fluently and so well, amending and developing Mr. Fenway's imperfectly expressed thought; his head just a trifle on one side and ever so little thrown back, while he looked over expressively at Marian with a tender, intelligent light in his half-closed eyes. Mrs. Fenway was happy.

But just then garrulous little Wetherspun, who had not understood a word of the conversation beyond the allusion to furnaces, broke in briskly: —

"Fenway here has a way o' gittin' his firewood so 's 't he can afford to burn a good deal more on 't 'n mos' people can. He has to buy a good lot o' timber fer his fork handles; an' the way he gen'ly manages is to buy a hull tree, mabbe a passel o' trees; he uses the straight-grained parts fer handles, and then he has all the rest to do what he 's a min' ter with. I often say to my wife, I says, 'I only wish I had the run o' Fenway's wood-pile!' As wood growed skurce, I done what other folks done in this part o' the country. Fust, I bricked up the big fireplace, up to the farm, so 's to make it smaller, an' put in a false back to save the back-log. We tried that a few years; then my wife, she got possessed to have a stove, an' nothin' would suit but one o' them 'ere railway cook-stoves, that was all the go when they fust come round."

"I guess 't was you that was possessed jest as much as ever I was," said Mrs. Wetherspun. (She made another wry face over her cider, exclaiming again, "How can anybody like it!") "I got tired to death hearin' you fret an' groan about the wood we burnt."

"Wull, my wife, she alluz burnt wood as if 't would n't bring nothin' in market, and did n't cost no elbow grease, nor nothin,' to chop and haul it. Though I don't think," added the sociable little man, "'t ever I fretted an' groaned about it any to hurt."

Here Mr. Daskill changed the topic of discourse by asking if much more might not be done by an enterprising firm than ever Farnell did, in buying up grain and wool in that region.

"That," said he, with a glance at old Carolus, who was fast asleep, with his empty glass resting in his hand in his lap, "that will help the farmers instead of ruining them."

"No doubt of it, sir," replied Mr. Fenway; "although this is n't the wheat country it used to be. Farmers can't get the crops they could a dozen or fifteen years ago."

"That's so," said little Wetherspun. "Ye may plaster yer land, an' clover it, an' summer foller it, an' try their new-fangled tricks with 't, but ye can't coax it to perdoose what it use' ter 'ithout coaxin'. When land kin' o' gits wore out fer wheat, there ain't no trick 't ever I heered tell on that 'll bring it up agin. We can't git the berry noway, like what we use' ter could. The yield 'll be light, an' the berry 'll be kin' o' shrunk, an' the flower 'll be mean quality, spite of ye. I'd got sick o' sowin' winter wheat, 'fore ever we left the farm. Spring wheat done better fer a spell; but that don't make fust-best flour, by a long chalk. So I says to my wife, says I, 'Mammy,' says I, 'we 've got 'bout enough now to live on economically,' says I. 'Our gals 'ave got married off' — married perty well, too, one on 'em did, husband's got propety; 'we 've done about our sheer o' hard work,' says I, 'an'

if I git any kin' of a decent offer fer the farm I 'm a gunter sell,' says I."

"I guess 't was a good deal more me than you that said that," replied Mrs. Wetherspun. "'T was about the hardest thing 't ever I done, Mis' Fenway, to talk my husband into the notion of givin' up the farm, an' settlin' down onto a little place where we could keep a cow an' pig, an' raise our own garden sass, an' live on the intrist of our money."

Mr. Wetherspun took up the theme again. "Got a fust-rate cow—raised her from a calf; ain't nary blemish nor trick about her; gives a brimmin' pailful; come in about a month ago,—ninth o' Janewary, wan't it, mammy? You sot it down in the alm'nic."

Mrs. Wetherspun said it was the 'leventh; Mr. Wetherspun insisted that 't was the ninth; when she declared that she had as good a mind to step home an' git the alm'nic as ever she had to eat. Mr. Fenway was laughing; Mr. Daskill, smiling blandly, was conversing aside with Marian; and Mrs. Fenway was frowning and fidgeting, and wondering how she had ever been able to tolerate these silly people in her house, and what *would* Mr. Daskill think, when old Mr. Carolus awoke from his nap, and suddenly shrieked out:—

"What your folks going to do with Farnell's Folly, Mr. What's-er-name? You had a mortgage on 't,—a mortgage that kivered it and toppled over a little besides, he, he! did n't it? Farnell wanted me to take a mortgage on 't, but I would n't tech it! I would n't tech the thing!"

"We shall do well enough with it," said Mr. Daskill. "If I continue in charge of the business here, I shall fit it up in good shape, and either sell it or make it my summer residence, according to circumstances." And Mrs. Fenway saw unmistakable matrimonial intentions in the look he cast on Marian.

"I would n't tech it with a ten-foot pole! I was n't such

a fool!" chuckled old Carolus. "Mr. Fenway, I'll take another glass of cider."

"A man might make a perty slick kin' of a place on 't yit," declared the sociable Wetherspun. ("Don't care if I do, half a glass, seein' you got the pitcher in your hand. There, there, Mr. Fenway!) I'm beat if Farnell did n't make it look a plaguey sight better 'n ever I thought he could. We all considered he was as good as gold; an' as we had a little money to spare, my wife thought —"

"Now, don't go to sayin' *I* thought! 'T was you that thought you'd better let Farnell have it. But if you'd listened to me," Mrs. Wetherspun was saying, when Mr. Wetherspun interrupted her in his turn.

"If I'd listened to you, I should 'a' took them four hundred dollars out o' the bank an' lent 'em to Ward Farnell, to have 'em safe, and to git bigger intrist! Lucky enough I stopped to consider on 't."

"*You* considered on 't!" exclaimed Mrs. Wetherspun indignantly; "when 't was me that hild back."

So they had it, first one and then the other, till Miles Fenway, laughing quite as much at his wife's ludicrous distress as at the dispute that occasioned it, passed the apples.

"I'm obleeged to ye," said Mrs. Wetherspun, looking sharply, and feeling two or three before selecting the nicest Spitzenburg in the dish. "Not any plate, thank you, Mis' Fenway; I guess I won't eat it now, arter the cider. I'll carry it hum, if you've no objections."

"Dear, no!" said Mrs. Fenway. "Take a couple."

"I don' know. Ye goin' to take one, daddy?"

Mr. Wetherspun said he was; but Mrs. Wetherspun took another, just the same.

"I guess I'll take mine hum, too," said Mr. Wetherspun. "I'm a good while a-eatin' an apple, my teeth 'ave gin out so, late years. I hain't but about a tooth 'n' a half in my

head. Jest look a' that, Fenway!" And the little man stretched his jaws asunder, and poked his head forward, exposing an unspeakable chasm, which Fenway, with extreme good humor, put on his spectacles to explore. "My wife, now" (the chasm closing again), "she's got false teeth, an' she can manage to stow away an apple as quick agin as I can, if I was to die."

"Put another in your pocket, Mr. Wetherspun," said Mrs. Fenway, "and take it home, if you think you must be going, though I don't see why you need to hurry. (Get his hat and coat, Walter.)"

Mr. Wetherspun looked as if he did n't see why he need be in a hurry, either; but said, "I s'pose we better think o' startin', had n't we, mammy?"

"It's about time old folks was a-gittin' hum, I s'pose," replied Mrs. Wetherspun, looking very hard at Mr. Carolus, but still making no movement to start.

"Oh! must you?" cried Mrs. Fenway. "If you re'ly say you must!" And she made haste to get the lady's things.

"Oh! I'm obleeged to ye!" said Mrs. Wetherspun, in a faint voice. "Jest lay 'em on a chair; don't trouble yourself to hold 'em, I beg."

"No trouble at all!" And Mrs. Fenway, with the greatest cheerfulness, insisted on standing with her visitor's bonnet and shawl, until she, very reluctantly, put them on.

In the mean time Walter had got little Wetherspun into his overcoat, and the prospect of their speedy departure looked very cheering indeed.

But now Mr. Daskill was pressing Miss Fenway for a song; whereupon Mrs. Wetherspun said:—

"I did want to hear one of Marian's perty little pyaner tunes; she doos play so sweet an' perty! Shall we wait jest a minute, daddy? We need n't take off our things."

So they sat down with their things on, to wait for the perty

little pyaner tune. How the vivacious Mrs. Fenway managed to restrain her feelings under the circumstances (it may be said in passing) is to this day a mystery to those who know her. But there was no help for it.

“Well, do play, and done with it!” she whispered.

“And the idea!” she remarked to the writer of this history afterward, “my daughter had scarcely taken her seat at the piano, and begun to sing, when those ill-mannered Wetherspuns, that had been so anxious to hear her, put in to talk, and kept their everlasting clack going so you could n’t have told whether the song was ‘Annie Laurie,’ or ‘Come over the mountain to me, love.’ I never was so provoked in my life!” which was certainly saying a great deal.

At first the impatient little woman tried, with gestures and hishes addressed to Walter, who was n’t making a noise, to convey a wholesome hint to those who were; but in vain. At the end of the song, therefore, little mollified by Mr. Daskill’s polite praises of it, she exclaimed:—

“There, Marian! I would n’t sing any more: you don’t do yourself justice to-night.”

Which was true enough, Marian being troubled about too many things to put much spirit into her music: her singular adventures with Mr. Daskill,—and did he really fancy her as much as he appeared to? and Will Rayburn, why had he not kept his appointment? and would she be glad now, or embarrassed, when he came? might he not at this moment be passing, and, by a glance under the curtain, see his formidable rival bending over her as he smilingly turned the music leaves?

“You must n’t sit with your things on, Mrs. Wetherspun; you won’t feel them when you go out,” said Mrs. Fenway, with extreme solicitude for the health of her guests. (“You go, Lottie! maybe that will start ’em.) What! you going, too, Lottie?”

"Yes, I think I must, on account of the baby," said Lottie, putting on her shawl. "Are you going home with me, Mr. Wetherspun?"

She playfully took his arm, said, "Good-night, all!" and cut short his interminable leavetakings by pulling him out of the house. "Good-night, Mrs. Wetherspun!" she called from the doorstep, as she hurried that lady's bewildered little husband away.

"Wull, if that ain't smart!" said Mrs. Wetherspun, stung with jealousy, strange as it may seem that that amiable quality should so long have outlasted her front teeth.

"You 'll have to run, or you 'll lose your little man, sure as the world!" said jolly Mr. Fenway. "Lottie's husband is away, you know!"

"Smart!" repeated Mrs. Wetherspun, with her sourest expression of countenance, hurriedly tying her bonnet-strings, "to leave me to go alone!"

"Here 's Mr. Carolus; he's too gallant to suffer that," said Mrs. Fenway. "Mr. Carolus, Mrs. Wetherspun wants you to beau her home."

"I 'll beau her home; I 'll beau her to the devil, if she wants me to!" said the old man. "But she must wait my time. I'm going to eat an apple and drink a glass of cider yet."

The idea of the lady's waiting for that quite appalled poor Mrs. Fenway.

"Well, well! never mind, Mr. Carolus; she thinks she can't stop."

Indeed, Mrs. Wetherspun, exasperated by the sound of Lottie's laughter as she ran off with Mr. Wetherspun down the street, had no notion of stopping. She rushed out in pursuit, but rushed back again for her apples, which she had left on the piano, and which she could not afford to lose, whatever became of her husband, then sallied forth again, ejaculating, "Smart! smart! I should say!" until out of sight and hearing.

CHAPTER X.

MR. FENWAY GIVES SOME ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF.

"THERE!" said Mrs. Fenway through her firm little teeth, shutting the door and locking it after her guests, as if still afraid of their coming back for something, "I thought they never would go!"

Returning to the sitting-room, she found her husband and Walter laughing heartily at the pair, Mr. Daskill chatting with Marian, and Carolus scraping and munching his apple.

If the old cynic had attended strictly to that business, the liberal housewife would not have cared how many apples he scraped and munched. But warmed by the cider and refreshed by his nap, he twisted himself about in his chair, and addressed himself with most inopportune and persistent familiarity to the preoccupied Adolphus, spattering the lively apple juice as he scraped, and dropping the moist pomage from his trembling knife as he talked and ate.

"I'll tell you what, Mr. What's-ye-name," he was saying, "you'll find our friend Fenway has done more to build up this place than any other ten men, except myself. He's the father of the town, the father of the town, Mr. What's-ye-name."

"You must be its grandfather, then, Mr. Carolus," said Mrs. Fenway, "for you furnished the inhabitants with rum a good many years before my husband began to furnish them with pitchforks."

"Very good! very good!" said Mr. Carolus. "Mrs. Fenway, I owe you one," — which he proceeded to pay. "I sold rum to your father, and sent him home tipsy many a time

'fore ever you saw your husband. 'Twan't my fault, neither; he would take too much." Scrape, scrape; munch, munch. He had paid with usury.

"Mr. Carolus!" began the little woman in a sudden blaze; but just then Mr. Daskill, with that admirable tact for which he was distinguished, diverted attention from this trifling episode, which he appeared not to notice, by asking Mr. Fenway how he came to be a fork-maker.

"I don't know that my wife will let me tell," said Miles; "she never likes to be reminded of the time when we lived in a little shanty where Wetherspuns' house now stands, and I blew my own bellows and shod horses in a log shop no bigger than this room."

"I should think you were telling about it now," said Mrs. Fenway. "I'm sure it can't be of interest to anybody."

But Mr. Daskill remarked that the history of a large and prosperous business, built up by degrees from humble beginnings, always possessed an interest for him; and Mr. Fenway, reckless of the curtain lecture that awaited him, proceeded.

"I came to this town from Madison County, twenty-six years ago this spring. I had been a blacksmith's apprentice," he went on, regardless of his wife's forbidding frown. "I was just out of my time, — twenty-one years old, had the longest pair of shanks and the shortest pair of trousers that ever came together, combed my hair where I could see it in a cracked looking-glass, and was altogether as complete a gawky as ever you set eyes on."

"That he was! that he was!" crowed old Carolus. "The greenest peep that ever went on two feet."

Miles laughed heartily, and said, "Mr. Carolus would n't trust me for a shoestring."

"I can't believe, father, that you were ever so verdant as you pretend," said Marian.

"He was n't," said Mrs. Fenway shortly.

"Wife, you've forgotten. It has always been a wonder to me since, how your father came to hire me, and how you came to marry me. Luckily for me, your ideas of a beau were very different in those days from what they are now. If such an awkward, ungainly, four-bladed jack-knife of a chap as came to court my wife, Mr. Daskill, had afterwards come to court her daughter, she would have let us know whether she thought him green. The truth is, times have changed, and the popular notion regarding marriage has changed. Something we poor country people had scarcely heard of then has come up and usurped the place of common sense, and now overrules a man's household, his happiness, business, religion, — everything. I mean *style*. A man can't go to church now, unless he goes in style. It would be dreadful to be obliged to go to heaven in the old-fashioned way. I know plenty of nice, pious people who would much prefer to travel the other road genteelly. The world's opinion of them seems to be of far greater importance than what they themselves are. Even a man's dinner, nowadays, is often a matter of less consideration with him than what his neighbors think of it. And what makes this state of things so ridiculous for us common country people, Mr. Daskill, is this, that our so-called style is only a paltry and cheap imitation of your grand way of doing things in the great cities."

"There is plenty of the cheap kind you describe, even in the great cities," remarked Mr. Daskill.

"But there's very little of it here, very little indeed!" said Mrs. Fenway, positively.

"It's very small, what there is of it," said Miles; "but there's a great deal of it. It makes the law of marriage, as well as of everything else. In my day, it was thought that if a young man and woman could get a comfortable living separately, they could get quite as good a living together. They

were not ashamed to get married and go to housekeeping in the same style they had been brought up to, or even to come down from it a little. A wife was regarded as a helpmeet. Young men, accordingly, did n't feel as they do now, — that it is n't safe or respectable to take a wife, until they can support her in elegant idleness. They married to gratify their own hearts, not other people's eyes. If the modern notion had prevailed in my time, I should have had to wait ten or fifteen years, before I could have had the face to ask my wife to marry me. As it was, she did n't mind my long shanks, nor my short trousers, nor my small income, nor my big feet, nor the fact that I was only a hand in her father's shop. That shows that she was in love with me. She'll deny it now, but she was. We got married on less than three hundred a year; set up housekeeping in as snug a shanty as ever you saw, with only two rooms; went to work with a will, and were as happy as the birds that sung for us in the old elm-tree before our door. Were n't we, wife?"

"I thought you were going to tell about the first forks you made," said Mrs. Fenway impatiently.

"Certainly; I'm coming to that. My father-in-law's health and business faculties were beginning to fail him —"

"For the reason I mentioned," squeaked old Carolus.

"And it was n't long before I found myself master of the shop. There I shod horses, and mended ploughs, and log-chains for the farmers, on my own account for a year or two. But, you see, I'm too tall a man to be stooping all day over a horse's hoof, holding his leg up between my knees, and I was soon glad to leave that part to a man I hired. People brought me all sorts of things to mend, from a penknife to a wagon-tire. One day Mr. Wetherspun, whose acquaintance you had the pleasure of making just now, came in with a broken pitchfork. It was a poor thing, and I told him I could n't mend that so easily as I could make him a new one. So I

set to work and hammered out a fork ; and that was the first fork I ever made. In a few days he came back, and said that was the best fork in his hayfield, and wanted me to make him a couple more. Then somehow his neighbors took it into their heads that I could get up a good article in that line ; they could n't buy anything at the stores so light and strong and elastic ; and so, you see, I had my hands full. I found I had made a hit ; but it was two years before I was able to turn it to much account, for lack of means. With such tools as I had to work with, I could n't compete with the regular fork-manufacturers, of course ; but I imagined, if I could build an addition to my shop, and put in a couple of trip-hammers, and a grindstone or two, and machinery for making the handles, I could establish a profitable business. So I went to a man who had money, and asked him for a loan of a thousand dollars."

"That was me," said Mr. Carolus, still scraping and munching. "He came to me, and perfectly astonished me by asking for a thousand dollars, on no better security than his note, and a lien on the new shop."

"Which you let him have, of course," said Mr. Daskill confidentially.

"No, I did n't. It was a mistake. I did n't know Mr. Fenway then as I do now, and it was a mistake ; but I should do just so again under the circumstances, — on principle, sir, on principle."

"Mr. Carolus believes in lending money for his own advantage, not his neighbor's."

"So does every man, every man, sir ! I never advanced a dollar for an accommodation to anybody, and, so help me Jehoshaphat, I never will !"

"Besides," said Mr. Fenway, "I had lost him the sale of a few forks by my puttering. He cursed me and my shop in strong language, — he is noted for strong language, — run his

eye up me as if I had been a flagstaff, and he, a small boy, astonished at some creature at the top, and told me to go to the — what was it, Mr. Carolus?”

“I guess it was the devil. I think I told you to go to the devil. It was just like me. I did n’t suppose you ’d ever pay a dollar. It was a d——d mistake!”

Mr. Carolus nodded, and smacked, and called for another glass of cider.

“I ’ll give you another glass if you ’ll agree not to swear,” said the good-natured Miles. “You are one of those men, Mr. Carolus, in whom a little cider develops an astonishing tendency to profanity, and you ’re quite profane enough when you ’re sober.”

“Say what you please, but give me the cider, give me the cider!” The old cynic held out his glass with shaking hand. “Mr. Fenway and I have always been very plain with each other, very plain. I swear, but I don’t get drunk. No man ever yet saw old Carolus drunk!”

“He was very plain with me at the time I speak of,” said Miles. “He might have advanced my fortunes five years by befriending me then; but, instead of that, he sent me to—well, a particular friend of his. He missed the satisfaction of helping an honest, poor man; but that was n’t much to him. I missed the thousand dollars, and that was a good deal to me. I got the shop, though, after a while, in spite of him; and one morning was heard the music of those delightful trip-hammers. Music to me, sir! I began to make forks on a large scale. Then, how to get my forks introduced into market? They were in good demand right around here; but that demand was n’t extensive. I sent samples to Buffalo, Rochester, Detroit, and other places. Then whenever a pedler came along, I made it a point to trade with him, giving him a few of my forks in exchange for his kitchen ware and dry goods. He was pretty sure, when he came this way

again, to want more forks. Still, it was up-hill work. I was in debt, and did n't know how I was ever to get out of debt, and I began to suspect Mr. Carolus was right in refusing to lend me money. My wife said I was a fool; for after I had got my machinery going, I could n't sell forks enough to pay for it. I believe there's a time in the history of almost every such enterprise when discouragement hangs like a black cloud over it, and you think it will never see blue sky."

"I never said you acted like a fool," Mrs. Fenway declared.

Miles laughed. "Well, I won't dispute you: Mr. Daskill might think the Wetherspuns had got back again. I never blamed my wife for being discouraged; the idea of setting up a fork-factory, because a few of my neighbors had thought I could make a serviceable implement, *was* absurd, as she took frequent occasion to remind me."

"Now, Mr. Fenway!"

"Don't interrupt me, Mrs. Wetherspun. To add to our troubles, we had grown a little too ambitious since we had ceased to be blacksmiths, and got to be manufacturers. The shanty did very well for a blacksmith's family, but it would n't answer at all for a manufacturer's domestic establishment. We must move. So we came here. This was considered a grandish sort of house at the time, though I believe our women folks have been growing rather ashamed of it of late years. It is n't the *style*, you know. My wife said she blushed for the old house after Ward Farnell built his Folly. I believe it was a good thing for the neighborhood that Farnell failed as he did: we should all have to build grand houses, if he had n't. That's the curse that follows the extravagance of one or two: others think they must imitate it, whether they can afford to or not. If one little girl in school is to come out in a lovely new dress on exhibition day, that makes twenty other little girls envious and unhappy, and

drives a dozen mothers distracted ; and such worrying and hurrying, scheming and contriving, as you'll see in every house, until the whole twenty are rigged out in finery of some sort, is enough to make an honest parent wish — My wife has got over behind me here," Miles laughingly interrupted himself, "where she can nudge me, if I am saying anything out of the way ; and as her elbow has been playing a pretty lively tattoo on my back for the last minute and a half, I suppose I have been indiscreet in my remarks. Never mind, we'll return to the fork-factory, if you are interested."

Mr. Daskill was, and Miles went on.

"It was a hard tug and a steady tug, for three or four years, just to keep the thing going. I had n't the money to advertise, and I could n't get the money. I could n't find a partner willing to put in capital, and take hold with me. That was the state of things when a young fellow who had peddled a good many of my forks stopped here one day, and let fall a remark which was destined to effect a change in the business. 'I believe,' says he, 'a man could make a good thing of it just to travel with your forks and nothing else, and introduce 'em through the country.' We struck a bargain, and in a few weeks he started out with a load of forks. His way was to stop at every farmhouse and country store ; he would show a man on the spot what stuff was in the tines by jumping and springing on 'em ; and their shape showed for itself. The result was, after a few trips, he ordered a new wagon built expressly for the business, and travelled with two horses instead of one. Soon I had three teams going in the same way. The business began to look up. Wherever the forks became known, they were in demand. From scores of small places, orders came through dealers in large places, who found themselves obliged to supply my forks. I still keep one man travelling constantly for me ; that is my son-in-law, Geordie Lorkins, Lottie's husband. We first knew him as a pedler, and I gave him forks in exchange for —"

Miles felt his wife nudging him again, and wondered how he was going wrong.

"You need n't call him a pedler; he is your travelling agent," said Mrs. Fenway.

"Well, well! often as I have heard Lottie reminded that she has a pedler for a husband; *travelling agent* is good! I'll tell Lottie: it will comfort her."

"Is he the gentleman I had the happiness to be taken for this evening?" asked the polite Mr. Daskill, turning to Marian.

"I have only one brother-in-law," replied Marian, innocent as a dove.

"And only one dear friend?" Adolphus gave her a searching look.

"Oh, I have many dear friends," said Marian.

"What!" said Miles. "You took Mr. Daskill for Geordie, when you met him at the door? You need n't regard it as a poor compliment, either, Mr. Daskill. Geordie is a fine fellow if he *is* a pedler, or rather *was*; I must n't forget that he 's a travelling agent now."

Just then somebody sprang up the doorstep. The bloom forsook Marian's cheeks. But immediately a hand, having tried the latch, began to pound the door.

"It is Frank," said Mrs. Fenway. "I had forgotten that he was out."

She unlocked the door, and the boy came bounding in.

"Oh, I tell ye!" he began, unabashed by the presence of company, for he was not diffident, like his brother Walter. "Marian, you don't know what 's happened to your feller!"

"*Her feller!*" said his mother, with a threatening look. "Take off your cap. Don't talk about *her feller!*"

"Will Rayburn. He 's one of 'em, anyway; I don't know how many more she 's got. He 's had an awful accident! He was coming down the street, and I guess he was coming here."

Mr. Daskill glanced at Marian. Her face was ashes of roses. He was too shrewd a man not to read her secret.

"Ye see," said Frank, "a lot of boys was sliding down Elm Street, and one sled was coming round the corner like lightning on runners, when that silly little Syles girl started to cross over. She had got half-way, when she heard us scream at her. That frightened her, and she did n't know which way to run more 'n a goose, but she was backing right in before the sled, and she 'd have had her legs broke, but Will Rayburn, he came along just then ; he just made one jump and a half to the middle of the street, and he 'd have had her on the sidewalk in a jiffy, but she was scared out of her wits, and dodged away from him, and as he was catching her, another sled took him, — a bustin' big double-runner, six fellers on it, — and down he went with — oh my ! about the worst broken ankle, I guess, ever you saw."

"How long ago was this?" said Mr. Fenway, rising.

"About half an hour. I went along with the boys that took him home. They've got two doctors there, setting his bones, now."

Did not this seem like a fatality? Or was it a special providence? I dare not surmise what thoughts of self may have flashed across Marian's mind, but her mother's face said altogether too plainly: "I am sorry for Will ; we shan't have him in the way, though, now, I guess, till we know what Mr. Daskill's intentions are."

Mr. Fenway was the only one who expressed much regret. He dismayed his wife, after her white lie, by saying: "We expected the young man here this evening. Now, I think, if you'll excuse me, Mr. Daskill, I will step round and see him. A very worthy young fellow," he added, with a dash of humor, "if he is Mr. Carolus's nephew."

"I don't own him ! I don't own the fellow !" cried old Carolus. "Just like him to get hurt in some such devil-may-

care, foolish way. Why did n't he let the girl alone, and mind his own business?"

"He would have been a worthy nephew of his uncle, if he had," said Mr. Fenway.

"We all seem to be interested in this young Rayburn," observed Mr. Daskill. (Another glance at Marian, whose expression of suffering and constraint was pitiful.) "He is one of the most promising young men in my store. If you'll permit me, I'll walk around with you, Mr. Fenway."

"Do. Won't you come, too, Mr. Carolus, and say a good word to your sister and your nephew? Now will be a good time to make up with 'em."

"I'll be d —— d if I do!" squeaked old Carolus. "They're no relations of mine. I've disowned 'em. I'll walk with you as fur as my house, but not a step further, not a step further, Miles Fenway!"

Mr. Daskill took rather cold leave of Marian, the mother thought. The boys followed their elders out. Mrs. Fenway and her daughter were left alone.

CHAPTER XI.

GEORDIE COMES HOME, AND SOMEBODY WITH HIM.

As soon as Lottie saw Mrs. Wetherspun fairly out of the house, she released Mr. Wetherspun's arm, saying, "Oh, mercy! there comes your wife in full chase!" and ran gayly home, leaving that estimable couple to jog slowly after her, with a heavy quarrel on their hands.

From Brook Street she turned into Mill Street, by the lower edge of the pond. The night was overcast, but not dark, the moon shedding a pallid light. The street was deserted, and all that quarter of the village would have been as silent as it was solitary, but for the occasional cracking and groaning of the thick-ribbed ice. Then there was the low, constant, plashy roar of the dam, which poured its whitened waters, summer and winter, within sight of her door.

Beautiful to her, the solitude of that lonely walk home. How happy she was, tripping over the crackling snow! There's the light in her own window, at sight of which how her glad bosom thrills! In that dim corner room lies her precious baby asleep. How good God was to give her such a treasure, and such a home, and such a husband! In the simplicity of her heart, Lottie could never leave her home and her babe for an hour, and find them really there on her return, without experiencing this sweet overflow of gratitude and love. There is the light, there the dear chamber. All's well! Blessedness and delight have not passed away like a dream, as often, in her brief absence, she half fears they may have done.

"O Geordie," she thinks, "do you feel as I do, I wonder,

when you come home and see the light, and know that baby and I are there, waiting for you?"

She cannot conceive of a happier home, if only Geordie were not so much away. Would she give those three little rooms, and the tranquil happiness they contain, for all the world beside? The Misses Wintergreen, who live in the other part of the house, have certainly the four best rooms; but they are not cosy rooms like hers. How could they be? The occupants have no baby to care for and love, unless they borrow hers; they have no Geordie to think of in his absence, to look for and wait for with such delicious pangs of tenderness and yearning, and to welcome with such joy when he comes. How can they live as they do? thinks sympathetic Lottie, and pities their solitary state from the bottom of her heart. Solitary? Why, what are you thinking of, Lottie? They are three, in the best rooms in the house; and you are mostly alone with your baby. Is love, then, such company to you?

Her father's house is no longer like home to her. "Live there?" she says; and wonders why (since she loves them all) her heart leaps up so lightly when she gets away from her mother's influence.

"O mother, mother! how can you be so worldly? I know what you were thinking, when Mr. Daskill spoke of fitting up the Folly. Ah, Marian! he is n't the man to make you happy. But you will marry him if he asks you to, I see plainly enough."

And it is not without a pang that Lottie remembers how her pedler boy used to be received at the house, and contrasts her mother's scornful treatment of him with her simpering deference to this pretentious stranger.

But hark! Is that a sleigh coming? The merry bells sound like Geordie's. "Go lang!" says a cherry voice, followed by the familiar crack of a whip and a merrier jingling of the bells, — joyful sounds to Lottie, sounds for which she

has listened and waited many a pallid winter night, and wondered, wondered if she would ever hear them again.

She steps inside the little gate, the team turns up to the big one. Then she is aware that Geordie is not alone. He is speaking in low tones to some person at his side,—a woman! at sight of whom, with sudden faintness, she recalls Bob Syles's slanderous story. Geordie drives into the yard, calls out "Whoa!" at the side door, throws off the buffalo robe that covers him and his companion, rises, like a buffalo himself, in his huge, shaggy overcoat, and lifts her carefully to the ground.

Lottie looks on in amazement. No, she is not jealous; she believes in Geordie. She runs in through the front way, unlocks the side door, and meets him bringing in a strange woman clad in black, with black hair, which strangely sets off a white face, and eyes that glow for an instant like a cat's, as they advance from the darkness into the light of the little kitchen. Geordie springs forward, and hugs Lottie in his huge buffalo arms.

"My wife," he then says, introducing her. "Lottie, this is Mrs. Chilgrove."

Mrs. Chilgrove gives a hand of ice, and says with slow and nervous lips, "I am happy to meet you," without a trace of emotion either in her face, or in her low, compressed tones of voice.

"Sit down," says Lottie, marvelling who she can be, and almost fearing the death-like countenance in its heavy pall of hair. "You must be very cold."

She places a chair for her by the stove, and opens the damper and puts in wood, at which the strange woman remarks, in the same low voice, without emotion, "Don't trouble yourself: I am not very cold."

"We've had supper," says Geordie. "How's baby? I must get a peep at her, 'fore I take care of the team."

Lottie follows him into the chamber.

"Who is she?" she whispers, behind the half-closed door.

"Hanged if I know!" says Geordie, with a droll grimace.

"How long has she been with you?"

"About twenty-six hours and a quarter, now, as near as I can reckon. It's the funniest scrape ever I got into! She says her name is Chilgrove, but I've named her 'my Folly,' in competition with Farnell. Can we keep her over night?"

"We can't turn her out-doors. There's the sofa-bed. But do tell me! How did you fall in with her? for land's sake!"

"It's a long story. I'll tell you all about it, after I've put the ponies up."

Geordie threw the door open for more light, and bent over the babe in its crib. There was a noise in the kitchen, and Lottie hastened to meet the Wintergreen sisters, who, looking in from the other part of the house and finding a strange woman seated by their neighbor's stove, had recoiled upon each other, and were now huddled, like three elderly Graces, in the doorway. As they all wore steel-bowed spectacles, the six oval glasses of which glittered in the lamplight, and each had three short auburn ringlets on each side of her face, and all looked and dressed alike, they must have formed a somewhat astonishing group to the mind of Mrs. Chilgrove, as they stood courtesying and backing away from her, and oh-ing and ah-ing apologetically.

"Excuse!" said the foremost.

"Beg the lady's pardon!" said the second.

"We were not aware!" said the third.

"Mrs. Chilgrove, the Miss Wintergreens," said Lottie.

Mrs. Chilgrove bowed slightly in her black bonnet; while the three pairs of spectacles and the six clusters of ringlets moved up and down vivaciously.

"Ah, Miss Abby! how d'e do?" cried Geordie, coming in.

"Why, Lizy Ann!—and there's Maria, handsomer than ever! I'd kiss every one of ye, if I knew where to begin."

"Nonsense!" simpered Miss Abby.

"What talk!" simpered Lizy Ann.

"No danger!" simpered Maria.

"Not in my wife's presence,—no, no!" said Geordie.
"Don't go."

"Yes, we must," said Miss Abby.

"We only just looked in," said Lizy Ann.

"To tell Lottie about baby," said Maria.

Lottie hoped baby had not given them any trouble while she was out.

"Oh, no, indeed!" said Miss Abby.

"Slept just like a mouse," said Lizy Ann.

"Never made the least mite of noise!" said Maria.

Lottie thanked them, and the three nodding heads, with their three pairs of glasses and eighteen short auburn ringlets, vanished.

Geordie then went to stable his horses, and Lottie was left alone with the strange woman.

"You'd better lay off your things," she said.

"As you please," the woman replied; and slowly undoing the strings of her black bonnet she handed it to Lottie.

"You don't look well: let me make you a cup of tea."

"Thank you; I don't need anything. I am very well."

Then followed a long silence, embarrassing to poor Lottie, who meant to be hospitable, but could not, somehow, make talk with this cold, impassive creature sitting by her stove.

"About thirty years old; pretty? no—yes,—if she wasn't so unearthly pale. She has had some great suffering,—lost a husband or a child, perhaps," thought Lottie, with a gush of sympathy. "I'll be very kind to her, though I can't feel easy with her in the house. Why can't I?" She was glad when Geordie came in.

Geordie was not what you would have called handsome. His face was too red, his nose too prominent, his forehead too wrinkled (not with care, but from a droll habit he had of lifting his brows as he talked to you), and the humorous lines about his mouth were quite too deeply cut, enclosing it in a sort of parenthesis. His manners were a trifle uncouth, and he flavored his speech a little too strongly with the country vernacular, not from ignorance, but from a love of fun. Mrs. Chilgrove watched him as he greeted Lottie again, and observed that he saw in her all beauty and goodness, and that she found nothing but comfort in his bleak, red face.

"Biddies lay any yet?" he asked, throwing off his buffalo coat, and showing that he was not such a huge fellow, after all.

"The pullets are beginning to lay a little. I've saved up about three dozen eggs expressly for you."

"Just like you," said Geordie, sitting down and putting his feet up on the stove-hearth. "Why don't you eat 'em yourself? My way is to eat right at the hens' heels; then you have your eggs fresh. No egg is fit for the table after it's nine days old: it grows tough next to the shell, and the yelk settles on one side long 'fore it's musty; and it's musty long 'fore you can convince a city landlord or boarding-house keeper that it ain't a fresh-laid egg. Pullets have done nobly though. Weather has-been cold enough to freeze the rooster's crow."

"Comb, you mean."

"No; the comb is easy enough to freeze, but it takes a cracking cold night to freeze the crow. Did n't you ever hear of the rooster that went to crow one morning when the thermometer was about forty degrees below zebray?"

"Zebray!" laughed Lottie, uneasily, afraid Mrs. Chilgrove might think her Geordie did n't know any better.

"Below Nero, then," said Geordie. "As fast as he crowed,

his crow, without making any noise, just froze; and the old farmer, going out and seeing something under the roost kin' o' white and transparent, curi's-looking, shaped a little like a ram's horn, but tapering at both ends, and light as ary feather, picked it up and carried it into the house and laid it down on the hearth, when, I declare, if the plaguy thing did n't thaw all at once and go off in as clear a *Oo—oo—oo!*" —Geordie crowed by way of illustration — "as ever trumpeted from a hen-roost."

"Geordie, you'll kill me with your nonsense!"

"Stop my mouth, then. Any apples?"

"I put a couple in my pocket up at the house to-night: I thought of you."

"Just like you. Have one, Mrs. Chilgrove? Give her a plate, Lottie."

Mrs. Chilgrove accepted the apple and the plate in a languid way, but did not eat.

Geordie bit, and rattled on just the same. "How are they all up at the house? Nance happy? Never gets cuffed nor nothing, nowadays, I suppose." Then to Mrs. Chilgrove: "Nance is the little darky I told you about, the one I picked up down on the Ohio. The mother had run away with her from Kentucky; the slave-hunters had ketched her and got her into a boat on the river, when she jumped overboard to get away from 'em. And she did get away, I reckon! She flung off her black skin and other fixings, and went where fugitive slave laws don't operate, as far as I can learn, and kidnappers don't like to get over the border. They got her body, but they did n't get her, — not very much. They said they'd give me ten dollars if I'd look as I was driving along, and find where she'd hid her young one. I said I'd look; and it was n't an hour after that when, as I was passing a piece of woods, thinking what a nice Christian land we live in, I found the gal, — a little mite of a tot she was then, not

taller 'n a coffee-pot; and black! ace of spades is nowhere. She was peeking over a log, side of the road, looking for her mammy, poor thing! I thought 't was some wild animal till she showed the whites of her eyes. 'Here 's a chance to earn my ten dollars,' think says I. 'Oh, ain't it a Christian country!' think says I. But I'm a foolish sort of fellow about some things; and, 'stead of selling out the little critter for thirty pieces of silver, more or less, hanged if I didn't clap her into my pedler's wagon and kiver her up. Then when the kidnappers come up with me, I stopped and told 'em they ought to give me a dollar, just for the trouble I'd had looking for the gal; then I stumped one of them to trade horses, and when they disrespectfully declined my proposals, I axed 'em if there was anything in my wagon they wanted, and invited 'em to look at my assortment,—dry goods, brushes and combs, steel traps, baskets, dinner horns, pocket knives, fancy articles of all sorts. But they allowed there was n't anything in my wagon they wanted,—at which I was rather tickled than otherwise, I guess. So they let me drive on; for I'd been so free and inviting urging them to look at my wares, they never 'spected I had a little woolly pate tucked in among the tinware and paper rags. All the while I was awfully afraid the little thing would squeal: she'd have spoiled my fun if she had. 'T would have been a penitentiary job for me. But I got her off, and got her safe home. She was the comicalist little cub! My mother set her life by her, and when she died, I made a present of her to my wife's mother, to conciliate her when I was courting."

The frozen soul of the white-faced woman seemed to have thawed a little:

"You must think your husband brings home strange acquaintances," she said.

"Geordie can never turn away from a person in distress," replied Lottie.

"He has been very kind to me," said the woman, still without a tremor of feeling in voice or feature. "At least, he meant it for kindness."

"You must have suffered dreadfully," said Mrs. Lorkins.

The stranger regarded her with steady intensity of expression, and answered in a close, rigid tone of voice:—

"I have had a terrible experience. Do not ask me what. You think well of mankind; you are both good, and you judge other men and women by yourselves. I would not disturb your faith by having you know what I have been through."

As she spoke, Misery herself seemed to be sitting there in black robes by the fire. Lottie, with a woman's sympathy and curiosity, would have pursued the conversation; but Geordie made haste to change the topic.

"All well up 't the house, did you say? Marian got any more beaux?"

"I guess so; there was a new one there to-night that mother was awfully sweet on,—rich and stylish, just the sort to tickle her fancy. He acts as though he was sweet on Marian. And, oh, dear Geordie! she *has* a pretty face. I could n't help thinking as I sat looking at her to-night, I did n't blame the men for falling in love with her."

"I came within one of falling in love with her once," said Geordie. "I got as far as her sister. Who is the snipe?"

"The man from Buffalo, who has taken charge of Ward Farnell's business."

"What! Daskill!" cried Geordie. "Smashing, stylish fellow! If he takes a notion to Marian, I'm afraid several other small fry—Will Rayburn among 'em—will find their cakes rather doughy. Beg your pardon, ma'am!" Geordie sprang, and caught the plate, which was slipping from the pale lady's lap. "You must be very tired. Maybe"—turning to Lottie—"she would like to go to bed."

"I will get the sofa ready now," said Mrs. Lorkins.

Geordie went with her into the little parlor. As they disappeared, she in black tightened the interlocked fingers of her thin white hands, straining the palms outward and downward upon her lap, in a sort of spasm, at the same time rolling her eyes upward with a look of pain and wild passion, which those who had only beheld her tame and cold might have been amazed to see.

"Has n't she brought any clothes with her?" Lottie asked her husband, as they pulled out the sofa-bed, and arranged the cushions.

"Nary rag but what she's got on."

"It's the strangest thing I ever heard of! I can give her a night-gown; but how happens it a lady like her—"

Geordie interrupted her. "I'll tell you something more astonishing than that when we get her off to bed."

Accordingly, after the strange visitor had retired, Geordie sat down with Lottie by the stove, and told her the story.

"You see, last night, as I was driving along, just after dark, the ponies suddenly shied, and came pretty nigh spilling me into a gully. I held 'em in, and looked down on t' other side, and there, lying flat by the track, was the figure of a woman, jet black on the snow, and hanged if I did n't think fust she was dead! I got out and took hold of her, and spoke to her, when she gave a sort of a moan, and sat up.

"'What do you want with me?' says she, as if I had been interfering with her rights.

"'I want to clear the track for my team, for one thing,' says I. 'Are you sick?'

"'No,' says she, 'nor drunk, nor out of my senses; so you can go on and leave me, as soon as you please.'

"'But you'll freeze to death!' says I.

"'That,' says she, 'is nobody's affair but my own.'

"'Beg your pardon, ma'am,' says I; 'but if you scare my team and upset my sleigh, and I get a broken neck, it's my

business, rayther, t' say nothing about my wife. Besides,' says I, 'if I see a fellow-critter in a position where they 're like to die, and I might help 'em, but go off and let 'em die, seems to me I 'm kind o' responsible.'

"'Are you your brother's keeper?' says she, in a voice as cold and clear as ice.

"'Yes, and my sister's, too,' says I, 'when I see they need my help.'

"She was standing on her feet by this time, and I could see that she was a lady, though a strange and desperate one.

"'What will you do about it?' says she, as if 't had been a matter of perfect indifference to her.

"'I 'll take you to some house,' says I.

"'No house wants me,' says she.

"I asked where her home and friends were.

"'I 've no more home or friends,' says she, 'than if I 'd just dropped from another sphere.'

"There was such a mystery about her, and she faced me with such a look, she fairly made my blood curdle. I never was in such a fix!

"'You 'd better leave me,' says she; 'for if you take me up, you may not find it easy to put me down; and you may conclude you might better have been responsible for my death than for my life.'

"Gracious! I saw that plain enough. But what could a fellow do?"

"Nothing, as I see," replied Lottie, "but just what you did. You are so good, Geordie!"

"I don't know as to that. But I took her into my sleigh, and felt from that minute that I was in a scrape. Here I was, a married man, with a superfluous woman on my hands, that I could n't see my way clear ever to get rid of; for, as to shoving her into some poorhouse, that would n't be exactly my way of doing things, you know."

"No, it would n't ; bless you, Geordie !"

"Well, we stopped at the next tavern, where I always put up, if I can ; and who should I meet there but that scamp of a horse-jockey, Bob Syles ! I suppose my stopping there with a woman will be blarted all over town when he comes."

"He has come and blarted already. Mother told me the scandal this evening, and I did n't believe a word of it. Though when I saw you come with a woman, I own I felt a little queer, only for a minute. It was all over as soon as I saw your face. Has n't she told you anything about herself ?"

"We have talked a good deal ; but not a bit of her history have I got from her. If she was a young girl, I might guess what the matter was. But she 's a woman of experience, and it 's no ordinary case of deception and desertion, I 'm certain."

"But what are we to do with her, now we 've got her here ?"

"That 's what 's been bothering my wits ! I remember how I chuckled over little black Nance when I carried her off, for I knew what I could do with her. But I have n't chuckled over this woman, not much !"

So they conversed, in low tones ; and all the while the strange guest in the little parlor lay with cold hands folded under her cold, white face, in the light of the lamp left burning by her bed, — not asleep, but staring upward at vacancy with those intense, greenish-brown eyes of hers, hearkening to the reverberating ice, and thinking thoughts which Lottie, with her awakened woman's curiosity, would have paid a price to read.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT HAPPENED TO WILL RAYBURN.

MORE than once that evening Will Rayburn had walked past the Fenway house and seen visitors go in. He did not much care for Lottie or the Wetherspuns. He cared more for his disagreeable old uncle, Carolus, whom he always hated to meet. Then, once more approaching the house, resolved to enter in spite of all impediments to his wooing, he encountered Mr. Daskill mounting the steps just before him.

Village gossip travels fast, and Will had heard of Marian's adventure with Adolphus and his dog that afternoon. He had laughed at it. He did not laugh now. Stung with a sense of something wrong, he once more walked by. He cursed his own weakness for doing so; yet what could he have gained by going in? If he had entered, the new autocrat of the store and the humble clerk must have found themselves uncomfortably in each other's way.

The curtains were up, and passing the house again, he could see Mr. Daskill sitting at his ease, the centre of the little circle, and Marian blushing and smiling at something he was saying. It was not a soothing sight. He had not liked the man of ostentatious and patronizing manners any too well. He felt that he hated him now.

"Oh! but this is base in me!" he said as he turned himself away, somewhat as he would have taken an insane man in charge. "Have I no confidence in the girl I love? It is so natural for her to be pleased with gentlemen's attentions! I must make up my mind to that."

He must do something, however, to take up the time and

fight his impatience. There were three or four meeting-houses in the place, and he was approaching one of them, — a plain, white-painted structure, — where a noted preacher was at that time holding forth. He saw the dimly lighted windows, and heard the hollow echoes from within. It was not the place of worship which Marian frequented, but it reminded him of what she had said of his lack of religious faith, and, curiously attracted, he turned up to the door.

It was long since he had been at church, finding more in his books at home, or in the woods and fields, to feed the hungry soul, than fell from any pulpit in Waybrook. Perhaps he was wrong; there must be something in religion which he had never yet deeply felt. Why not hear again the old arguments and exhortations, and open his heart, as in his childhood, with the devout desire to know and live the truth? He went in.

The house was mistily lighted, a dim haze filling the air above the heads of the congregation, and making little halos around the lamps. Doors and windows, closed to keep out the cold, kept in the poisonous atmosphere. The place was hot, and steaming pores added their cloud to that of exhaling breaths. To a worldling like Will, it occurred that those who showed such abundant zeal for the salvation of the soul would have done well to give also a little thought to the welfare of the body.

The preacher, a robustious, deep-chested revivalist, was flushed and sweaty, with the earnestness of his work. He walked to and fro in the pulpit, and shouted to the rafters and remotest corners; he leaned over, and talked in low, impressive tones to the anxious souls on the seat before him; he pounded the desk, as if to awaken the sleeping pews; he shook his warning forefinger at the unrepentant sinner, whom he knew or guessed. Then, pausing, he would draw a long breath, fix his features with a peculiarly grim expression, and

strip up his sleeves, as if, grown impatient of words, he were about to try pugilistic methods with the enemy of souls.

Many of his hearers sat quietly in the square-cornered, straight-backed pews. Others were kneeling, as if in prayer. An old woman, whom Will knew, was standing by one of the supports of the gallery, wringing her hands and shouting, "Jesus! O Jesus, come!" in the pauses of the exhortation, with tears running down her face; while a chorus of shouts and groans went up all over the house.

One thing struck young Rayburn: there could be no doubt whatever about the terrible sincerity of the preacher and of many of these people, think as one might of their want of culture and good taste. He sat down in a pew near the door, perfectly calm, and determined, if possible, to know the meaning of what he saw.

Some young fellows around the stove behind him were munching peanuts, and making sport of the meeting. One of the elders went to reprove them for their misconduct, and talk with them about their souls; and they pelted him with peanut-shells as soon as his back was turned. Will thereupon gave them a stern and indignant look.

"If you can't sit still and behave yourselves," said he, "you had better go home. This is the first time I have been here, and I want to hear something besides your tittering."

Will Rayburn was well known to them, and they felt his reproof all the more because he was not one of the converted.

"We are only just having a little fun," they said.

"Is n't it rather foolish," Will replied, "to make fun of what is so serious a matter to others? I see nothing ridiculous in it."

There was a hush among the peanut-eaters, and the preacher went on.

"What will a man do to save his property, to save his house? O my friend, your house is a-fire! It is n't insured!

You might have got it insured this very day, but you put it off, put it off, and now it is burning up. See! the flames are already bursting out of the roof! See their fiery tongues licking, licking up your hard-earned wealth, devouring your precious home! O my friend, what do you do when I shout to you such an alarm as that? Do you sit with your hands folded, and your eyes winking sleepily at the terrible fact? Oh, no! you are wide awake enough then! Maybe you have a child in the house, — a dimpled, rosy-cheeked, golden-haired girl, — sleeping in the very room the fire is just bursting into. O my friend, what are your feelings as you run — run — run, — oh, that you had wings, so that you might fly! — to snatch your darling from the flames, and save that priceless life, even if the house must perish?"

Having made the scene of the burning house and rescued child frightfully real to his audience, the preacher lowered his voice, and said with thrilling solemnity:—

"What is a house compared with a human soul? the destruction of a little property, to the loss of salvation now held out to you, waiting for you, imploring you to take the cup and drink? What is the agony of a moment, suppose you are yourself burnt in the burning dwelling, — the short-lived agony of a few seconds, to the endless — endless — endless torment in eternal fire?"

As he paused, the people groaned and shouted: "O Lord, save us!" "Have mercy on our souls!" "Amen! amen! amen!"

Thereupon one of the fun-making youngsters by the stove rose to his feet, looking pale as his shirt-collar, dropped a handful of peanut-shells he had been keeping to throw at his companions, stalked solemnly down the aisle, and took his place on the seat with the anxious.

"Another soul saved, thanks be to God!" shouted the preacher. "I see the gate of heaven open to let him in!"

Oh! what glory inside! O my friends, look up, look up there!" He pointed over the gallery with one hand, holding the other raised, as if to shield his eyes from dazzling light. "Do you see the blessed angels in their white raiment?" Many actually turned their heads to gaze. "Do you hear them playing on golden harps, and singing hallelujahs over another soul saved? But the gate will soon be closed! Who else? who else? What perishing sinner will make haste to enter in, before he is shut out forever?"

More peanut-shells were dropped, and two other young fellows went together down the aisle to the anxious seat. Then the congregation broke forth in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving, intoned overmuch through the nose, and dragged sadly out of time by voices holding too lovingly by certain precious words, but full of the emotions of an excited and jubilant congregation.

The preacher had sat down. And now, the singing ended, old and new converts went around, singling out the unrepentant, and talking to them, sometimes with eloquence, often with tears, about their souls. One came to William; but soon found that, instead of having all the talk on his side, he became the victim of some baffling Socratic questions, which exposed his ignorance, and left the sincerity of his zeal open to suspicion.

"Don't think there ain't nothing in religion," said the man at length, "because I don't seem to give you very satisfactory answers."

"I think there is something in it," William replied; "but it is something you know nothing more about than a ship knows of the depths of the sea. You are only tossed a little."

"I thank God that I am tossed," said the man. "I feel sure our Great Pilot will bring me into port."

The answer, coming from the man's heart, struck William. They parted; and he now turned to listen to the woman standing by the pillar.

She was telling of the joy Jesus had brought to her soul, speaking in a sweetly shrill voice, raised to a wild chant, and falling from the monotonous keynote to a third below at the close of each strain. He was astonished at her ecstasy and her eloquence. An uncultivated person, of coarse, laborious life, she was lifted far above her usual range of thought by a power beyond herself,—an influence indescribable, wonderful, which swayed all that commonplace assemblage of people like a spiritual tempest, and which even William Rayburn, calm as he remained in the midst of so much excitement, could not but feel.

He left the house to keep his appointment with Marian, and would probably soon have lost the impression which the strange scene made upon him, had it not been for what happened afterwards.

Returning towards Mr. Fenway's house, Will saw the child endangered by the sled, and met with his accident, as reported by Frank, in rescuing her. He picked himself up, and was for continuing his walk, when he made the painful discovery that one foot would not bear his weight. Overcome by the anguish of the hurt, he sank to the ground again, and, as the adverse Fates would have it, instead of visiting his sweetheart that evening, went speedily to his own home on the double-runner that had disabled him. He tried hard to conceal from his mother the serious nature of his injury. She was violently agitated at seeing him brought in by his comrades, with both the village doctors at their heels; and, being very fond of her boy, as well as very much like his Uncle Carolus in some respects, she alternately pitied him for his misfortune and scolded him for his imprudence.

"O my poor child, you're crippled for life, I am sure! Why did you rush in before the sleds? If that Syles girl *would* be so foolish, I don't see why you should risk your limbs! The pain is dreadful, I know! Not one of the Syleses

was ever of any account but to get other folks into trouble. Dear, dear! any bones broken, doctor? I wish they was all in Jericho!" meaning the wretched Syleses, not the bones.

"Hush, hush, mother!" said Will, in a low voice, while he winced with the pain.

He had been got to bed, and the surgeons were bandaging the foot, when Mr. Fenway and Grand-Seigneur Daskill (as the boys at the store called him) came in. Will was relieved in his mind on seeing these two together. It occurred to him now, that Adolphus might have been calling on Miles instead of Marian. Why had n't he thought of it before?

Fenway was cheerfully sympathetic; Daskill, magnanimous.

"Well, well, William! I hear you have been playing the hero," said the merchant.

"That 's too grand a phrase for anything I 've done," Will replied. "It would have been thought nothing of if I had n't got hurt. I 'm afraid I sha'n't be able to get to the store to-morrow."

"I 'm afraid you won't, nor for many days to come. But make yourself easy on that score. I 'll see that your wages go on just the same. No employé of mine shall ever suffer for doing a good action,—as far as I am concerned. Now, gentlemen," to the surgeons, "do the best you can for him, and you will oblige me very much. Mrs. Rayburn, you will nurse him, of course, with all possible care: a mother can be trusted to do that. Well, good-night. Shall we go, Mr. Fenway?"

And with the air of a man who had the ordering of things in his quarter of the universe, even to the attentions a mother was to give her suffering son, the grand seigneur passed out. Mr. Fenway did not accompany him, but went soon after; the physicians also withdrew; lastly, Mrs. Rayburn, at Will's command, thinking he wanted to sleep, went to lie down in the next room. He was left alone with his pain and his thronging thoughts.

There, in the silence and darkness, a great light, like that which shone around Saul of Tarsus on his journey, flooded the young man's life. His condition of mind, so long agitated by love and anxiety, had rendered him peculiarly susceptible at this time; and now the hope, that was almost a certainty, of Marian's acceptance of him, the awakening of thought and emotion which he had experienced at the revival meeting, even the stimulus of bodily pain, an unconscious excitement, all combined to produce an exaltation of spirit, which seemed to him like divine inspiration.

He was no longer a child, lying under the trees, and looking up into the summer sky with a child's yearning and questioning soul, but a man, with all a man's passions and powers of thought, to whom the reality of spiritual life and the unspeakable beauty of truth and righteousness were suddenly revealed.

"To live this life," he said to himself, "to carry this which I now feel forever in my heart, how gladly would I give up riches, honors, accept poverty, shame, toil, be a companion of the humblest, and a servant of the poor!"

There was one trait which distinguished all who had the Carolus blood,—alike the uncle and the nephew, much as they differed in other things. That was sincerity. According as they believed or disbelieved, so they lived and moved among men. There was no hypocrisy about that sincere old sinner; never any about this sincere young sceptic. The old man believed, with all his intense and narrow soul, in a life of selfishness, and lived it openly. And now that the young man was beginning to see the grandeur and ravishing grace of that other life, would not something real and potential come of it?

Somehow, with this new-found spiritual joy, the love of Marian Fenway was so closely mingled that they seemed one. He could not see his life separate from hers. With pure and

exalted passion he reached out the arms of his spirit, and drew her image to him, murmuring, with infinite tenderness, "I am all yours now, and we are both the Truth's! We will go through the world daring to do right,—we two together, and the love of heaven in us, O Marian!"

The next morning Mrs. Rayburn came softly into her son's chamber, and found him asleep. She was going softly out again, when he started up.

"I was just having a strange dream," said he. "I saw a sexton digging a grave. It was winter; everything was gloomy, and cold and shivering people stood looking on while he broke the clods. At last, at the very bottom of the dark pit, the point of his pickaxe struck a spring of water. It rose in a glittering jet, higher and higher, flashing in the sunshine, and spreading out until it filled all the sky with a beautiful, rosy-white cloud. The world was changed to summer; and I saw the faces, which looked so sad and careworn before, wonderfully illumined, gazing up at the fountain. Then I looked again, and the rosy-white cloud seemed all made up of angels; there were myriads of them!"

"That was a very curious dream, my son," said the widow. "How is your ankle?"

He was gazing upward, with a far-away look in his eyes and a light upon his face, as from the cloud he had described. It was not until she had repeated her question—laying her hand on his forehead, wondering if he were not a little delirious—that his mind came back.

"Oh! my ankle! I think it is getting along. I had forgotten all about it."

"Will you have your breakfast now?"

"Any time," he answered absently.

"What shall I bring you?"

"The New Testament."

Good Mrs. Rayburn stood astonished. She was a moder-

ately pious, church-going woman, and she would have been pleased, had she not been in doubt as to his state of mind, to hear him call for the book which she had often urged him in vain to read.

"Oh! would you really like it, my son?" The well-worn, leather-covered volume was quickly brought. "What passage do you want to find?"

"I want to read over everything about Christ," he replied, taking it eagerly from her hands. "What an extraordinary life his was! I never understood it before."

"Oh! and do you think you understand it now?" asked the mother, with a hopeful smile.

He made no reply; his soul was absorbed in the book.

He read awhile, then called for pen and paper. He must let Marian know that her one great wish in regard to him was in a fair way to be fulfilled; he must tell her of this new, heart-quickenning joy.

The letter written, his mother must drop everything, and carry it over to Mr. Farnell's, to give it to Genevieve, who was to give it to Marian on the way to school. Poor Mrs. Rayburn still thought her boy a little out of his head.

Will hoped that Marian would come and see him. But she wrote him a letter instead, — not such a letter, either, as he had expected she would write. There was a singular constraint about it. She rejoiced, of course, at the serious turn his mind had taken; expressed sorrow for his accident and approval of his heroic conduct, but touched evasively the question of their personal relations.

It was a prettily written, charming billet, nevertheless, and Will tried to convince himself that he ought to be satisfied with it. His mind was abundantly relieved on one hitherto vexatious subject: Marian's mother could now have no reasonable ground of objection to his suit. How, then, could he doubt that all would yet be well?

CHAPTER XIII.

WILL RECEIVES A SHOCK.

WHEN Miss Maybloom's seminary, in the most ruthless and inconsiderate manner, robbed Ward Farnell of his oldest daughter, he regarded himself as a deeply injured man. The house was intolerably lonesome without her. He had nobody now to utter his complaints to during the day (though he was pretty sure to make up for the deprivation when she came home at night); nobody to wait upon him as he sat smoking by the stove; to bring his newspaper and his slippers; to provide the important matter of dinner, — sad strait for a man like Ward Farnell. It did seem as if Julia might have had a little more consideration for him when she accepted that situation.

Since his bankruptcy, the proud man had avoided society, but now, forced from home by sheer lonesomeness, he began to show himself in public haunts. He glided into the tavern and joined the group of bar-room loungers, in a very quiet and unostentatious way, as if anxious to shun observation. He soon entered more boldly, however, and took his dram, a conspicuous seat by the fire, and a part in the conversation; he even ventured into the old store, spoke humbly to Mr. Emmons, and gossiped with the village idlers sitting around the stove. He had felt great contempt for such idlers once: times were altered now.

After a little experience of this life, Ward Farnell began to consider himself an important figure in it. Not a loafer, sir, by any means, his manner seemed to assure you, but a gentleman of leisure; a great financier, unbending his facul-

ties after a long strain; a mighty merchantman, temporarily hauled up for repairs. To hear him speak of his former mercantile operations, or of his schemes for making future vast fortunes, was remarkably edifying to those who knew him least.

While accustoming himself to this new sphere, he used to drop in on a neighbor now and then; he even deigned to visit Widow Rayburn's cottage, and sit comfortably for a good hour by Will's lounge, when that young gentleman was laid up with his lame leg. Times were changed indeed.

"Now, William," said Ward Farnell, when he went away, "come over and see me as soon as you can hobble out."

One mild March afternoon Will did accordingly hobble over to Ward Farnell's cottage, — hobble into, and even through it, finding no one, until, guided by the sound of a saw, he discovered the retired merchant in the shed, assiduously playing upon the instrument which produced that homely music. Will, standing in the doorway, supported on leg and crutch, waited for him to finish his tune, then overwhelmed him with surprise and embarrassment by making his presence known.

"Ah, William! Truly delighted! But you — I'll put on my coat and be with you presently. This is very unusual work with me."

It was very unusual indeed; but the truth is, Julia had recommended it lately as a wholesome employment of his leisure, enforcing her argument by a statement of plain facts: breakfasts and suppers, let alone dinners, could not be expected to come to time without firewood sawed and split. Firewood there was, but no money in the house to pay for the sawing and splitting. She herself could do, and did willingly do, many things, even to subdividing now and then a stick (while he sat smoking his pipe and reading his paper), but her strength of arm was unequal, and her style of dress

unadapted, to wielding the manly saw. On this hint he had set himself to the ignoble task.

He was ready with his apologies:—

“Exercise, exercise, William! There’s nothing like it! I think of getting a horse soon.”

“A saw-horse?” said Will.

“No, no! a fine animal to ride; something to keep down this tendency to a corpulent habit. Walking and driving don’t do it. Sawing wood, alternated with splitting, is better, and very good exercise indeed. Did you ever try it?”

“It seems to me I have, and at no very distant period of my life, if my memory serves me,” Will answered; having, in fact, tried it that very afternoon, in spite of his lameness. “But I have generally done it not because I wanted the exercise, but because my mother wanted the wood.”

“A good, honest reason,” said Ward Farnell cheerily, leading the way to the kitchen. “Sit down. I’ve carelessly let the fire go out in the sitting-room” (it had gone out for lack of the aforesaid sawing and splitting), “but you won’t mind. Have a pipe? or a glass of something?”

Will had no occasion for either.

“I’ve been thinking,” said Ward Farnell, lighting a pipe for himself, “that a man of enterprise might make a pretty thing by getting up a Village Water-Power Co-operative Circular Wood-Saw Company,—give it some good name like that,—and saw wood for a whole community. Shareholders privileged. The water to perform the work. It might be made profitable, and pay the president, or manager, a good salary.”

Ward Farnell looked as if the said president or manager might be found without advertising in the papers.

“I see objections to such a scheme,” said Will.

“Good! Name them!” said Ward Farnell, with large toleration. “I always like to consider objections.”

"There are two classes of people who would not be apt to patronize your Central Co-operative Water-Power Wood-Saw—if I've got the title correct."

"Correct enough; I'm not sure but the form you give it is better than mine. All that can be considered afterwards. Now for the point."

Ward Farnell puffed and glowed. Argument was his forte, and he now had a scheme to talk about, with a young man at the other end of the alley to set up objections.

"First," said Will, "there are those who would find it cheaper to get their wood sawed by hand than to haul it to and from your Water-Power. A large class, I'm thinking."

"Ay, ay, William, a very large class. People living at a distance. You could n't expect the inhabitants of Siam and Senegambia to bring us their wood to be sawed. Granted. Now, the other class?"

Pins all down, and a spare. Ward Farnell poised his intellectual power for another roll.

"Those who," said Will, "regard the exercise of sawing, alternated with splitting, as something desirable for their constitutions."

"True, very true! Good, very good! But that class is small."

"As far as my observation goes," said Will, "it is—quite small." And his eye rested with a quiet twinkle on Ward Farnell.

Ward Farnell abruptly changed the subject.

"Now, make yourself comfortable, William. Julia will be home presently. She finds teaching a great relief to her mental activity, and she is doing an immense work up there at the seminary, perfectly immense! That reconciles me to her being there,—the good of the community. We have to sacrifice something to our fellow-creatures. Will, the

world is just beginning to find out what an extraordinary girl our Julia is. She's the most competent young woman, William!" and so forth, the father continuing to brag of his daughter until the daughter came in.

She was looking weary from her day's work at the school, but her face lighted up at sight of Will. Loosening her bonnet-ribbons, she sat down in the kitchen with her things on, and inquired about his hurt.

"My foot is all right, I think,"—he glanced down at it, as it rested on a chair,—“but it is hardly safe to use it yet.” Then he looked earnestly in her face. “How are *you* getting on? I'm afraid you find your new work harder than you expected.”

“It is perfectly gigantic!” said Ward Farnell. “There isn't another young woman, William—”

Julia interrupted him, and confessed that she found some things rather trying in her new situation.

“There's a class of girls in the school who give me a great deal of anxiety. In consequence of too much parental indulgence, or a want of natural capacity, they are shockingly deficient in the commonest branches of education. Some are children of wealthy parents; others come from families that cannot so well afford the expense of a private school. They are there because they are not capable of pursuing the studies expected of girls of their age in the public schools, and they would be ashamed to appear in the classes where they really belong. Private seminaries are more accommodating. So they come to varnish up their ignorance at Miss Maybloom's, and get on a little show of accomplishments, or at least to have it said that they have been at a fashionable boarding-school. How to do my duty by them I don't know.”

“She forgets she has a duty to herself and her family,” said Ward Farnell. “She pours her energy into those girls, trying to inspire them with some ambition. But it is like priming so

many dry pumps : they won't prime. She only wears herself out."

"I suppose I shall soon get used to it," said Julia, "and reconcile my conscience to things that distress me now. There are my French classes." She gave a shrug, and a look of comic despair. "In translation and construction some of the girls do tolerably well, but in pronunciation, horrible, most horrible ! They rattle off their Racine with railroad speed ; but Racine himself would not recognize a word of his tragedy, or a sound of his native tongue, from one act's end to another."

"Whose fault is that ?" asked Will.

"I hardly know," Julia replied. "I remember a similar state of things when I went to school there, and we had Mlle. Rossignol herself to instruct us. It is thought highly important for young persons learning French to get the accent from a native. Mademoiselle was a Parisian, but nobody ever got the accent from her. She tried hard enough to impart it; but the girls all lacked something,—either the ear, or the conscience of the ear, if you know what I mean. They would n't trill the *r*, or distinguish the nasal sounds, or pronounce the *u* twice alike unless they pronounced it wrong. She soon gave up in despair, and away they went, capering slipshod over the poor, downtrodden, unrecognizable French sounds. How she must have suffered ! I know now what that look of tribulation meant. I did as the rest did, because, while I was in the class, it was not easy to do differently."

"But daughter is like no other girl in the world, William !" broke in Ward Farnell. "She felt that it was all wrong ; so she proposed to give up the French class, and take private lessons. The little Frenchwoman used to come to the house, and I often heard her say it was a perfect delight to have such a pupil. Daughter would never pass over a sound without getting it as nearly right as possible, pronouncing very slowly at first, then acquiring rapidity by degrees."

"I've begun with a new pronouncing class of young girls in the same way," said Julia. "It is extremely trying both to their patience and mine. But I mean to have such a class that you will hear at least one *r* trilled in the course of a whole reading lesson, which will be a new thing up there. Then, to say nothing of the more difficult sounds, there are the simple *d*'s and *t*'s, which a Frenchman forms with the tip of the tongue against the teeth, and we, with it farther back, against the roof of the mouth. I never yet saw a teacher that noted the distinction; but it is one of those little things which go to make up what we call *accent*. I have got my class so that they perceive it, and by forming the *t* or *d* properly, they can trill an *r* that follows it, as they cannot easily if they begin with the tongue too far back. But I am talking to you as if you were as much interested in the subject as I am."

"You make me interested" said William; "you make me want to study the language." And he added, "If I thought I was to be disabled a whole quarter, and if an owl would n't be out of place among so many doves, I should like nothing better than to join your class."

"You can do better than that," Julia replied. "Come over here in the evening, and I will give you lessons."

She blushed, and was immediately on the point of taking back a proposal which she thought might with more propriety have come from him. But he eagerly accepted it.

"If you really want to learn French," said Ward Farnell, "you'll find her the most competent teacher in the whole country. She can teach the accent better than a native can: that's because she has a thorough knowledge of both languages. One would n't suspect it, because she is never heard quoting French. It is those who have only a smattering of knowledge who are always parading it." And Ward Farnell quoted, with pompous declamation:—

“A little learning is a dangerous thing:
Drink deep, or taste not the Hyperion spring!”

“O father,” cried Julia, “I’m afraid you are illustrating the force of your own misquotation!”

“What! have n’t I quoted correctly?”

“No, indeed. *Pierian* spring, not *Hyperion*!”

“I’m sure it’s *Hyperion*,” Ward Farnell maintained stoutly. “You’re generally in the right, daughter, but you’re wrong for once. Hyperion was a very important personage in ancient history. I suppose he had a spring somewhere. But Pyerion—I don’t know Pyerion!”

“Pieria was the birthplace of the Muses,” said Julia. “The Muses stand for culture. Pierian spring,—the spring of knowledge.”

“Ingenious, extremely ingenious, I admit. But you’re wrong, daughter. I’ve been familiar with the passage all my life. I can turn to it now. I know just the book in my library, the page of the book, and the line on the page.”

So saying, Ward Farnell, with that look of profound and positive knowledge which often goes further than facts in an argument, walked boldly and majestically into the next room, where, instead of hunting up his quotation,—which would have been no easy task, since the said book, even the said library, so soundingly alluded to, was entirely imaginary,—he proceeded quietly to kindle a fire in the stove with wood he had lately been splitting.

There was a silence for a moment, Julia and Will looking earnestly at each other. The same thought was in both their minds.

“How is Marian getting along?” said Will.

Julia hesitated. “Do you mean in her studies?”

“Well—yes—in her studies.”

“Not very well, I’m afraid. She is not at all like those

girls I spoke of, but other things take up her mind too much just now."

Will changed color. "I don't see how that can be. I have written to her since I have been sick. I hoped she would come to see me. But she does n't; and her replies to me have been very brief. Her excuse is, that she is wholly occupied with her lessons—making up for lost time. Of course, I approve of that."

"I should hope you would," said Julia, fingering her bonnet-strings, with a demure look.

The look was too demure. Will, with his quickened perceptions, saw beneath it what she meant to conceal.

"Julia Farnell," he broke forth, with startling directness, "will you be sincere with me?"

"You certainly deserve that I should be."

"You are in Marian's confidence?"

"No; I have been, but I am not now."

"Why not now?"

"Because, I think, she knows I would not approve of her course."

"Then you will be betraying no confidence if you talk with me freely about her. O Miss Farnell, will you be my friend?"

"I have a very strong feeling of friendship for you, William."

"Then tell me! Am I one of the things that draw her mind from her studies?"

"Yes, I suppose so; one of them."

"You suppose so! one of them! But not the principal one?"

"No, not now, William. I think you ought to know, but it is terrible to me to have to tell you. I love poor, dear Marian, and I—I wish I could say just what you would like to hear!"

After a strong effort at self-mastery, Will said, "Who is the principal one—now?"

"You ask of me what I do not really know, what I only suspect. I wish you would n't urge the question. I wish you would see Marian herself. You ought to see her, for her own sake as well as yours. I don't think it is too late."

"I will see her," said Will. "But, Julia,"—he had never called her simply Julia before,—“answer my question! Is it that man Daskill?"

"O Will, I fear it is!"

"From anything you have heard?"

"More from what I have seen."

Self-control had become impossible; Will trembled from head to foot. "Tell me all! What have you seen?"

"I have seen Mr. Daskill come out of the new house as she was returning from school, meet her, and walk home with her."

"Was she expecting him?"

"I think so. We were walking together. Her manner was strange and absent. she was evidently expecting or dreading something."

"Dreading—if I could only think that! Did she seem—pleased when she saw him?"

"She was in a flutter of excitement. That is all I know, I walked on and left them."

"Did this happen more than once?"

"Yes; three times, to my knowledge. But I was walking with her the first time only. After that I felt that she preferred to go alone."

"Then she wanted to meet him!" said Will. "And all the while she could not come and see me, she could write only very short notes, because she was so occupied with her studies! O Julia, to look at her, would you think her capable of such perfidy?"

"Perfidy is a hard word," said Julia. "Of herself, I don't think she could do as she does; but we know what influence she is under."

"Do you think it possible that she loves him?"

"It may be possible for her to imagine she does. She is very impressible."

"I know it!" Then, after a pause, Will added, "O Julia, do say something to comfort me!"

"William," said Julia, from immeasurable depths of pity in her heart, "I would if I could. And I can say one thing. I believe she loves you. She could never talk to me of any one else as she has talked of you. That's why I want you to see her. You might save her."

"I will! But if her mother is plotting against me again, it will be better for me not to go to the house. Can't you talk to her for me? Get her to see me somewhere?"

"Ought I to do that? I dare not promise."

Will considered a moment. "How long since she last met Mr. Daskill?"

"Ten days at least. I think he has n't been in town lately."

"I wish I knew how far matters have gone with them! Does he write to her? Of course you don't know. Maybe Lottie does. She is a good friend of mine. I'll see her to-morrow."

The younger girls were now coming in. Will got upon his crutch and one sound foot. As he was passing through the sitting-room, Ward Farnell rose from his newly kindled fire.

"My library is in such a condition since we moved, William," said he, "that I couldn't just lay my hand on that book,—Pope's Works, I'm sure it's Pope. And I've been thinking that daughter is probably right. I was misled by a passage in Shakespeare. He has something about *Hyperion to a satire*. I had got the two mixed up. Stop to tea, William."

Will thanked him and hobbled out.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARIAN FORGETS HER MOTHER'S COUNSELS.

WILL had thus early met with one of those troubles in life for which religion itself fails to afford consolation.

For two weeks his mind had been at peace with regard to Marian, and during those days and nights of solitary thought and study his soul had been filled with a great enthusiasm and a great faith. Self-sacrifice, even to martyrdom, had then seemed easy to him ; there was nothing which he would not give for the truth, no service he would not hasten to perform for brotherly love. Upborne on that tremendous spiritual wave, his power to overcome the world and live the life that enraptured him in vision appeared boundless. He had read and reflected a great deal, and talked with few as yet.

And now, at the first shock to his affections, the very foundations of his faith were shaken. He could *not* believe that all would be well with him if love were lost. To him, Marian and love were one ; he did not for a moment suppose that his heart could ever go out to another woman as it did to her. She seemed even a part of his religion.

On the afternoon of the following day, Mrs. Geordie Lorkins, looking from her window, saw a young fellow, with one good leg and a crutch, carrying the other leg between them, cross the muddy street and turn up at her door.

"Will Rayburn, with his broken ankle !" she exclaimed, and ran to meet him, and helped him up the steps, and made haste to place a chair for him, and set another for his disabled foot, and took his cap and crutch, and then introduced him to Mrs. Chilgrove.

Will wiped the perspiration from his brow, and looked across the baby's crib, and saw, sitting beside it, a quiet lady in black, embroidering, with elegant hands, an infant's skirt. The lady at the same time lifted her eyes, and beheld a strongly built youth of three-and-twenty, with strong, pale features, full of native energy and generosity. She took him in at a glance, and rose, gathering up her work.

"You need n't leave us, Mrs. Chilgrove," said Lottie.

But the lady, excusing herself, withdrew to the adjoining room. There, placing her work-basket on the bed, she sat down, and resumed her embroidery. The door was left ajar, however; and by a singular coincidence, she was seated in that precise position which enabled her, by just lifting her eyes, to see, reflected in the bureau mirror, a complete picture of the scene in the little sitting-room,—baby in the crib, mamma beside it, with her back to the open door, and Will, with his lame leg on a chair, his striking side-face slightly distorted, and rendered more haggard than it really was by a flaw in the glass.

"I wish she had stayed. I'd like you to get acquainted with her," said Lottie. "She seems to be a very well-intentioned, respectable person; pleasant, too, though she never says much. She helps me a great deal with my sewing, making up nice things for baby, especially. She's very fond of baby, and that wins my heart."

Will heard this account of the mysterious guest with indifference, if he heard it at all. Mrs. Chilgrove, in the bedroom, lifting a glance to the mirror, saw him wipe his forehead again nervously, but heard no word of reply.

"Lottie," said Will, presently, "I've come to have a little talk with you. I think you and Geordie have always been my friends."

There was a surging passion in his tones which prepared her for what was coming.

"We are your friends, Will," she said. "And it isn't our fault that things are as they are."

"Do you think it will be of any use for me to see her?" he asked.

"I'm afraid not," said Lottie sorrowfully, giving the crib a rock.

"Tell me the truth, now, Lottie! All I want—all I have asked to know, all along—is the truth. If she cares more for anybody else than she does for me that's enough. Is she in love with this Buffalo man?"

"That I don't know."

"You have an opinion. Is she going to marry him?"

"That is another question; I have an opinion about that."

"Tell me!" The young man held himself firm, like a brave soldier under sentence, awaiting his death-shot.

"Frankly, then," said Lottie, "I think Marian will marry Mr. Daskill."

Will said not a word. He was still firm, but very pale. She went on:—

"It has looked to me like it from the first. Instead of going back to Buffalo the day after he made her acquaintance, as he proposed, he stayed in town, and saw her every day or evening—I don't know but day *and* evening—for the rest of the week. I know of her getting at least one letter from him, since he went back to Buffalo, and of her answering it."

"She has no time to write *me* letters!"

"I should think that would be enough for a fellow of spirit like you. Why not give her up at once?"

The lady in the bedchamber kept her white hands moving, but took not a stitch, while her raised eyes studied, in the mirror, the reflected agony of Will's face.

"I can't give her up till I see her buried or married; or, at least, until she tells me she doesn't love me. I could never

get her to say that yet. I must see her. Does n't she ever come here now?"

"Not often. With her lessons and her love-affairs, she has n't much time left to throw away on me and baby."

Lottie glanced from the window, and changed countenance. Rising presently, in haste, she said, —

"Sit right where you are, Will! Be a man now, won't you?"

"Who is it?" Will asked.

"Strange, just as I was speaking of her!" Lottie replied. "It's Marian!"

Marian it was; not quite so pretty, by the way, not quite so exquisitely fresh and fair, as when we first saw her. After a season of extraordinary excitement, a season of reaction had ensued. She missed the stimulus of meeting her new lover in her homeward walks. A letter from him had sufficed to keep her spirits up for a day or two; but, having answered it, she now expected another, which did not come. Would he write again? Or, having toyed with her affections (or shall we say her ambition?) for a little while, did he now remember her only with a smile, as he thought how easily she might have been won?

She had ceased to blush at the memory of the kiss which he once rudely attempted to take. For had she not permitted — or, at least, not prevented him from taking — more than one since? And on so short an acquaintance! She blushed often at the memory of these, plucked from her all too-yielding lips by the impulsive fervor and irresistible audacity characteristic of this man.

She had come home from school that afternoon just as Nance returned from the post-office, bringing letters. She took them with feverish eagerness, glanced over them, and put them languidly aside. There was none with the Buffalo postmark; whereupon the lovely, the beloved, the fortunate

Miss Fenway appeared ready to sink with utter discouragement and weariness of life. Oh, ye unlovely, unloved, unfortunate ones, struggling at this moment in loneliness and poverty against untoward fates, yet triumphing over discouragement, and finding the hard-earned morsel of life somehow sweet and wholesome, after all, what do you think? Is she so much to be envied whom the weight of a rose-leaf makes faint?

Another thing troubled Marian. Julia had had a few words with her on their way home from school. They echoed in her memory now: "*You are trifling with one of the truest and best hearts in the world. You will find out what you have lost when you have thrown him away.*"

Julia had also urged her to see Will once more, if only to part with him kindly, and told her of his intended visit to Lottie. Suddenly Marian took up a letter, scarcely noticed before (it was for nobody but Lottie, and from nobody but Geordie!), hurried out with it, and walked quickly towards her sister's house. Why such anxious haste? Letters addressed in that bold, careless hand were not usually esteemed of so great importance by anybody but Lottie herself. An unutterable hunger of the heart possessed the poor child. Yet she could hardly have expected to meet Will; perhaps she merely wished to hear from him again, to know how he had looked, and what he had said.

She entered the house; and there, with her just-awakened babe, stood Lottie; and there, with his crippled limb on a chair, sat Will. There, too, it may be said, was the bureau-mirror in the next room, reflecting her pretty, startled face to the steady gaze of the strange woman.

Marian quite lost breath and color on seeing Will, but quickly put on a smile. He did not attempt to rise, he did not even put out a hand to her, nor force a smile in return, but regarded her with earnest, questioning eyes.

"A letter for me?" cried Lottie, seeing it in her hand.

"Oh yes! I forgot! I came to bring it," said Marian, rather incoherently. She gave the letter; and Lottie, sitting down, babe in arms, in the joy of getting news from her Geordie, almost lost sight of the little dramatic scene which seemed to possess such interest for the spectator in the bureau glass.

Marian was so glad to see Will out again! and she offered him her fluttering little hand. He took it, and held it firmly, almost too firmly for the unspeakable tenderness he felt for her, and looked in her falsely smiling face with reproach, and anxiety, and great love depicted in his own.

"You are not glad to see me," she said, bringing all her fascinations in play.

"Glad? Marian!" and to the watcher in the glass her coquetry seemed a light bubble on the heaving deep of this man's mighty passion.

"Why do you look at me so, Will?" she asked.

"Marian! why have n't you answered my last letter?"

"I could n't! I had no time — I did n't know what to write."

"Did you have time, and did you know what to write, to your new friend in Buffalo?"

Will dropped her hand, and for a moment Marian was frightened out of her arch, innocent ways.

"I shall not trouble you any more, Marian, after to-day. I am to lose you, I suppose; but I want you to tell me so with your own lips."

"It will be better for you," said Marian. "I am not worthy of you. I never was; I am less so than ever now."

There was a touch of sincerity in her tones as she thought of those alien kisses, and felt how weak, and vain, and shallow her own heart was compared with the strength and integrity of his.

Lottie, seeing how serious the interview was growing, said, "O Marian, if you would only be true to yourself once!" and with her letter and her babe withdrew to the adjoining room, closing the door behind her, and shutting out the remainder of the scene from the eyes at the mirror, — eyes which now appeared demurely downcast, studious of the dainty embroidery.

Marian felt that the time had come when she must either take Will or lose him. If she rejected him now, she could never hope to win him back. She was terrified at the thought. Oh, if she had had but this one suitor! she would then have been most happy. And was there any hope of her securing the other? I do not suppose she meant to be selfish or insincere; yet she could not even then help calculating her chances in one little corner of her heart.

"Do you love that man?" said Will.

She knew that if she said yes, he was too noble a fellow to importune her with another word. And it would not have been true; she had no such feeling toward Adolphus as that which drew her now, arms and spirit, body and soul, to this pure and passionate young lover.

"Oh, no! I don't love him."

"This is all incomprehensible to me!" said Will. "You and your mother had one serious objection to me, and only one, as far as I could ever learn. I scorn to push my claims now on any pretence of having overcome that objection. Religion is too sacred a thing in my eyes. But it is strange! While I was indulging in new dreams of happiness, making you a part of my new joy, believing we were now to go through the world wholly united, helping each other to live a true life, — even then you were plotting against me! How is it, Marian?"

"Oh, I have n't plotted against you!" said the conscience-smitten girl.

"But your mother has. She favors Mr. Daskill?"

"I think she does."

"Is he a religious man?"

Poor Marian could only falter, "I have never asked him."

"But you have talked with him. What do you think?"

Falsehood flew to the winds before this truth-compelling soul.

"I think he is not."

"And your mother thinks so too?"

"I suppose she does. I have told her what I think."

Sick at heart, Will turned away. For a moment he felt utter disgust, a sadly pitying scorn, for all that wretched intrigue. She saw it in his face, and, filled with remorse and despair, flung herself on her knees at his side. Her ambition faded like the illusive dream it was, and the fascinating image of the rich and stylish Adolphus receded far off from her, like something vain and unreal. Her heart was all Will's then.

And when, all his tenderness returning at sight of her tears, he pressed her again for the promise which was to end all this misery, and decide their mutual future, she did not start away, but, with a sweet ray of happiness breaking through the trouble of her face, said evasively, —

"I am so young yet!"

"But in a year or two?"

"I don't know — perhaps — if you will be a good boy."

After all, she did not quite mean to say *yes*; but Will understood that she did, and she knew that he understood her so.

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. FENWAY GETS HEATED AND COOLED AGAIN.

Now it so happened that the mail train, which did not bring Marian the longed-for letter that afternoon, brought something of even greater importance to her, namely, Mr. Daskill himself.

For Adolphus, be it known, was very much in earnest in regard to this suit. With the sagacity of an old head in love affairs, he had divined that she was interested in somebody else, — a dangerous competitor, probably that good-looking young clerk of his. He had a habit — and it is a very excellent habit — of giving critical matters assiduous personal attention; and, with the directness and despatch of a much-experienced man, long past the delicate bloom and reverential diffidence of sweet first passion, he had come down, bent on prosecuting this new matrimonial business in a business-like manner.

His coming was opportune and welcome to one, at least; and that was black Nance. It was welcome, also, if not exactly opportune, to Mrs. Fenway, who had suffered all a managing mother's anxiety in his absence, and who, having shared Marian's recent disappointment on getting no letter from him, was just now giving the customary vent to her emotional effervescence, by falling foul of the first ears that came within her reach; the said ears, on this as on other and too frequent occasions, chancing to be the black ones. Not that the vigorous lady was in the habit of swooping down upon them with sudden flap and buffet, as of talons and swift wings, without

abundant cause for her wrath. Oh no! but the fault was all in the girl, or in the freakish disposition of circumstances, to say the least; for it always happened that Nance, who could scarcely do anything worthy of reprimand when her mistress was in happy moods, was sure to fall into all manner of errors and mishaps when that lady's mind was disturbed.

"Poor Marian!" quoth the mother, watching her favorite child go down the street with Geordie's letter, "she's just as miserable as she can be! How cruel in that man to keep her a day in suspense! Is anything in this world so wicked?" (It had never occurred to her that it was in the least degree wicked for dear Marian to keep any number of lovers in that torment.) "I certainly believed—" She turned sharply on Nance, who had taken a broom in hand, and was singing as she swept the kitchen floor,—

"Did n't you lose a letter, you careless creature?"

"No, ma'am, I did n't lose no letter," said Nance, and went on with her sweeping and singing, showing a most exasperating indifference to a matter of torturing anxiety to her mistress. Thereupon the bird of fate swept down upon her.

"Impudence!" (Cuff, cuff.) "I'll learn you to sing when I'm talking!" (Cuff, cuff.) "And what are you raising such a dust for, when I only told you to brush up a little?" (Cuff, cuff, cuff.)

"You told me to sweep, and I can't sweep without making a dust!" was the girl's most unreasonable excuse, shrieked out, as she skulked and dodged. At the same time she still further disturbed the other's equanimity by adroitly interposing, ever and anon, the vicarious broom-handle, to receive the blows intended for her ears, and giggling, between yelps, at the highly pleasing effect on Mrs. Fenway's fingers.

"I'll raise a dust on you, you trollop!" And, possessing herself of the broom, madam began to dress the poor lamb's black wool with it in right lively fashion.

Nance screamed, dodged, put up defensive elbows, got into corners, and got out again as quickly as possible, and showed interesting glimpses of bright ivory and white eyes, momentarily flashing out from amid a confused jumble of parrying arms, ducking features, and fantastically flapping broom-corn.

The scuffle dislodged the cat from her comfortable quarters behind the door, where she lay concealed from her enemy, the dog; and her enemy, the dog, seeing her dart out of the house, darted after her with loud barks, and chased her up the first cherry-tree. There she stuck, at half-mast, unable to reach the branches, and naturally averse to dropping down into the expectant jaws of Franco. With slipping claws, and horribly ruffled tail, and yowlings of terror, looking down, first over one shoulder, then over the other, and seeing nothing but dog and danger below, there she scratched and clung; when Nance, imitating her example, also ran out of the house.

Mrs. Fenway was not, as we are aware, indifferent to appearances in her sober moments; but on occasions of great excitement she was capable of forgetting almost every other consideration in the earnest pursuit of the luxury in which she was indulging. So out of the house she ran likewise, completing the exodus of its inmates, and bringing up the rear of the rapid procession, — following Nance, who followed the dog that chased the cat that took refuge in the cherry-tree.

They did not all go up the tree, however; Nance did not even stop at it, as Franco did, but made the tour of the house, closely pursued by her plump little mistress, red as a fury, sweeping the cobwebs out of the sky with the uplifted broom, in view of the whole street. Slanted forward, and waving like a baleful ensign, sped the avenging besom, ready at any instant to descend upon the woolly pate tacking and veering before it. Once or twice it did descend prematurely, scarcely brushing Nance's skirts, and striking the ground, to the manifest hindrance and disadvantage of the pursuer. On one

such occasion, she turned sharply, and, running the other way, met Nance face to face. The girl was going too fast to stop; so was Mrs. Fenway. Nance ducked to avoid a blow; and over her went broom, and brandisher of broom, headlong.

Thrown out of her course by the collision, Nance took to the fish-pond, — an oval-shaped reservoir a few yards across, — at one side of the path in front of the house. I do not mean that she jumped into it, — she ran round it. Mrs. Fenway followed, having gathered herself and her broom up from the soft, moist ground (for it was thawing March weather), and the two made an interesting race-course of the muddy walk around the pond, to the extent of three or four circuits. Then Mrs. Fenway tried her device of suddenly turning and running the other way; but Nance, who now had her in sight, was too quick for her. Then the lady stopped on one side of the pond and shook the broom, and cast bitter words across at the girl standing on the other side, ready to run either way, according to circumstances.

Some school-boys, coming along the street, stopped at the fence, and even climbed upon it, to witness the show. They seemed to consider it a good show; but some remarks they made to that effect displeased Mrs. Fenway, who made an ineffectual dash at them with the broom. Nance took advantage of this diversion to perform a feat which had more than once been her last resort in seasons of tribulation. She sprang upon the trellis at the corner of the house, climbed it like a monkey, and got up on the roof.

At the same time, pussy, having fallen from the cherry-tree, and escaped the fangs of the dog with the loss of only a small quantity of fur, came careering around the corner, and made also a desperate leap for the trellis, which she scratched and scrambled up, reaching the eaves just as the two pursuers — Franco from one side with flaming tongue, and Mrs. Fenway

from the other with rampant broom — rushed into collision below.

Now Franco, seeing his mistress barking up the same tree, so to speak, with himself, and thinking puss the object of their mutual endeavors, bow-wowed, and bounded into the air, and pawed the trellis, with increased fury; while the boys in the street cheered the whole party with indiscriminate jocoseness, "Go it, broomstick!" "Sick 'em, doggie!" "Scratch-cat!" "Freeze to the shingles, snow-ball!" with other expressions of a like merry and hyperbolical character.

"Up there again, are you!" cried Mrs. Fenway, flourishing her weapon under the trellis. "Bow! wow-wow!" came in like a heavy bass accompaniment from Franco; both faces turned eagerly up at the two black fugitives (for the cat was as black as Nance) on the house.

"Come down this instant and be whipped!" said the lady.

Nance did not seem to think that a sufficient inducement, and, instead of coming down, she got up higher. Then, squatting on the slant roof, holding on by hands and heels to keep herself from slipping, she grinned over her knees alternately at her mistress and the boys, terrified kitty bristling at her side with high-arched back and tail.

Mrs. Fenway retreated towards the fish-pond, in order to keep the girl in sight over the edge of the roof.

"Come down, now," she called to her, "or I'll give you the awfulest whipping ever you had in your life when you do come!"

But Nance remembered that she had heard the same threat the last time she took refuge on that porch, and that afterwards, on Mr. Fenway's asking his amiable wife why she did n't put it into execution, she had replied, "Laws! the minx took good care not to come down till she saw I'd got over being angry; and I could n't bear to whip her then." So Nance concluded that the greater safety lay in sticking to the roof.

"It's good and sunny up here," she observed cheerfully.

"I'll fling things at you!" said the lady.

"I can shin up higher," said the girl.

Then suddenly the laughter of the boys at the fence was hushed to suppressed titters, the occasion of which seemed to be the interesting fact that, as Nance backed up towards the ridge-pole, in order to be out of the range of missiles, Mrs. Fenway, in order to keep her in sight, continued to back down towards the fish-pond. The pool was not dangerously deep; being fed by spring water and warmed by the rays of the March sun, it had melted its winter coating of ice to a demoralized and honeycombed mass floating deceptively on the surface; and, as it offered a fine chance for a cold bath to the lady's anger, the youngsters seemed animated by a lively desire to see her walk backwards into it.

She did not immediately gratify them, but stooped at the brink to pick up a pebble and throw it. Franco watched her hand as it revolved around her head two or three times in true feminine fashion. Then away went the pebble, hitting not even the house.

"Poor shot!" shouted the boys, while Franco launched himself after it.

Then all at once Nance, who with the cat had reached the apex of the roof, began to giggle and make fantastic gestures.

"Look! look!" she cried, pointing at the street. "Com-p'ny coming!"

Mrs. Fenway cast a quick glance over her shoulder; down went the hand which had been lifted again, and down almost simultaneously went she, having missed her footing on the curb of the pool, and gone sidewise with a shriek and a splash into the water.

The visitor, whose coming had been the immediate cause of the disaster, was, as we know, one of the politest of men, yet he could not help showing some sympathy with the merri-

ment of the youngsters at the fence and of Nance on the roof, as he hastened to the lady's rescue.

He found her struggling amid tossing fragments of ice, seized her by the arm and drew her, strangling and gasping, from the flood, cheered in his humane efforts by the boys at the fence shouting, "Fish her out!" "Try a hook and line!" "Use the nigger gal for bait!" and making other practical and timely suggestions.

"Oh, the horrors!" said Mrs. Fenway, once on dry land, if any land could be called dry where she was dripping. "O Mr. Daskill!" — spitting and weeping copious ice-water. "Did I ever!" She turned a wet, rueful eye up at Nance, riding the house boy-fashion. "That girl! that girl! She'll be the death of me!"

She suffered herself to be led towards the house by the civil Adolphus, who appeared wonderfully solicitous and attentive, urging her to lose no time in changing her garments, and ordering Nance to come down, in a tone which secured obedience.

"Walk in, Mr. Daskill," said the good woman; "make yourself at home, I beg. Nance, go for Marian as quick as ever you can! Dear me; you will excuse me, Mr. Daskill, under the circumstances!"

The man of tact not only excused her, but offered to go himself and walk home with Marian. By this time Nance was at the gate, making faces at the boys, and defying each and all of them to "bunt heads" with her. Mr. Daskill rebuked the youngsters for their recent unseemly levity (keeping as grave a countenance himself as he could), and advised Nance to go to Mrs. Fenway's assistance.

But Nance had no notion of falling into the good lady's power just then.

"You never can find the house," she said, rolling up roguish eyes at him; "'sides, I'll get it if I go in now." And she capered on before him, showing the way.

CHAPTER XVI.

TEMPTED BY A RING.

WILLIAM RAYBURN had left Lottie's house, carrying away with him a crippled limb, but a whole heart, and a positive promise from Marian to meet him there again on Saturday.

Then Marian, seeing Lottie come out to her with questioning sisterly looks, questioned herself, fearing she had been indiscreet; thinking of her mother, and remembering, with a strange feeling of bewilderment, that she was virtually engaged to William.

She seemed waking from a sort of dream, and began now to dread, as a certainty, what she had recently despaired of, the return of Adolphus. Could she have been sure he would not come, then what peace and happiness in the assurance that her heart was henceforth at rest in Will! But if he *should* come? She was one of those to whom a thing when hoped for is apt to appear far off, but near and imminent when its coming can bring nothing but regret; and she shared the feeling natural to us all, when, having made final choice between a bird in the hand and one of fine plumage in the bush, we secretly pray to be spared the pain of seeing present itself that which we have cut ourselves off from the possibility of enjoying.

What, therefore, must have been the effect upon her when, with the knuckle of her pretty forefinger to her lips, and an abstracted look in her eyes, turning from Lottie, she let her glance wander from the window, and saw, coming into the yard, escorted by Nance, the very man who was in her thoughts?

"Oh, I can't see him!" she whispered wildly. "How do I look? Are my eyes red? And my hair!" For she remembered that her head was newly from Will's shoulder.

"Mr. Daskill! the dickens!" said Lottie. "Run into the other room. I'll take care of him."

Marian, darting away, found herself not alone, but in the presence of an industrious needlewoman, who merely raised her eyes and bowed slightly as she made room for her. She flew to the glass and smoothed her hair, trying at the same time to smooth her scared and disordered looks, fumbled nervously with her collar, which had somehow got rumpled, and turned, at last, to the calm needlewoman.

"I beg your pardon, madam. Mrs. Chilgrove, I presume?" And would Mrs. Chilgrove be so kind as to assist?

"Certainly," said the placid seamstress.

The beautiful young girl, kneeling beside her, did not observe the strange, greenish hue which overspread the pale face, and the bitter, writhing expression which crossed it, gliding off at the corners of the mouth.

Collar and back hair were promptly arranged. Then as Marian stood once more before the glass, Lottie entered and said, —

"Mr. Daskill has come to take you home," handing her her things to put on. "Dear me, I'd forgotten you were not acquainted. My sister Marian, Mrs. Chilgrove."

"We have found each other out," said Mrs. Chilgrove, bowing coldly.

Marian drew a long breath and pressed her hand on her heart; then, putting on a resolute, beaming smile, went to meet her lover.

"I wish you could see him," Lottie whispered to Mrs. Chilgrove, "just to know what you would think of him."

"What I might think of him could not be a matter of the least importance to anybody," Mrs. Chilgrove replied.

"Just for curiosity," said Lottie.

"I have no curiosity." And Mrs. Chilgrove proceeded with her work.

But as Lottie followed her sister from the room, the demure eyes, stealing a quick glance at the mirror, saw, through the open door, the affable Adolphus advance, with radiant countenance and ungloved hand, to meet the lovely Marian.

After a little delay, Lottie returned alone, and found her guest at work, with downcast eyes as before, but with a faint flush on her usually pale cheeks.

"Now come into the other room; it is cold here," said Lottie.

"I am not cold," Mrs. Chilgrove replied, in her constantly low, equable voice. She was never too warm and never too cold, and her voice seldom rose or fell from that pitch of perfect gentleness and self-command. Nevertheless, she took up her work and went.

"Did you see him?" Lottie asked.

"I had a glimpse of him and I heard him speak."

"What do you think of him?"

"He is a polished, passionate, selfish man," said Mrs. Chilgrove, plying her needle.

"You could see so much through a crack of the door?"

"My intuitions are unerring. A man cannot speak, or put out his hand, or do the smallest thing without betraying himself."

"What do you think of Will Rayburn?"

"If your sister prefers this other man to him, I pity her. Both are men of strong feelings and strong wills. But Mr. Rayburn is sincere and thoroughly good. Mr. Daskill is not sincere."

"Does he love her?"

"Perhaps, — in his way. But the kind of love he has is fatal to women. I see he will be your sister's fate."

Lottie looked with astonishment and a kind of awe at the positive, pale sorceress, sitting there in solemn black, uttering cold prophecies while she drew out her tranquil thread. In a lower tone she asked, —

“What do you think of my sister?”

Mrs. Chilgrove disposed of Marian in a word, “She is a doll,” and changed the subject. “What is that on the carpet by your foot?”

“A ring, I declare!” said Lottie, stooping and picking it up. “Whose can it be?”

She handed it to her companion. Mrs. Chilgrove looked at it, and said, —

“Did Mr. Daskill take off a glove when he was here? What is his first name?”

“Adolphus.”

“Then these are his initials, ‘*A. D.*,’ on the inside.” Mrs. Chilgrove returned the ring to Lottie.

“So they are!” said Lottie. — “Nance,” she called to the black girl, who was dancing up and down the yard with the baby in her arms, “come, bring baby here, and take this ring and run with it to Mr. Daskill. It is one I picked up on the floor. He must have dropped it when he pulled off his glove.”

“Oh, ain’t that jest awful cunning!” exclaimed Nance, willingly giving up the baby for the bawble. “Oh, don’t I wish I had such a purty ring”; and she slipped it on her black forefinger. “He’s such a nice man, I shouldn’t wonder if he’d give it to me. He give me a quarter-dollar jest as we come in.”

“What did he give you that for?”

“Oh, I d’n’ know; coz I showed him the way and was sociable with him, I s’pose. He said he liked to hear me chatter. And I told him all about Miss Marian’s beaux and Will Rayburn. We seen him going away from the gate jest as we was coming down the street, and I said I’d bet he’d been here to

see Miss Marian. And he said I was a good little girl, and gi' me the money."

"Why, Nance, you did n't tell him she cared anything for Will, did you?"

"Course I did; and I said she 'd marry him fast enough if her mother was willing. You know she would."

"Well," said Lottie, "if you want your ears boxed a little harder than they ever were yet, just go home and tell mother what you said to Mr. Daskill."

"Oh, won't I?" giggled Nance. And away she skipped, holding up the ring before her admiring eyes, and running against the gate-post as she went out.

Meanwhile Mr. Daskill walked on by Marian's side, saying pleasant things, to which she listened and replied with a heart full of misgivings and a face all smiles.

"I had written a long answer to your precious little letter," he said, moderating his pace, and modulating his voice to a tone of tender earnestness, as they approached her home. "But I found I could n't say what I wished to say: there are things which cannot be expressed on paper. We can put our thoughts into words, but not the emotions of the heart."

"I thought you were not going to write to me again," said Marian.

"Did you think me a trifle?"

"I was afraid you might think me one; and I hoped you would forget—"

"Forget the sweetest moments of my life? Never, never!"

"O Mr. Daskill, have you considered how little we had known each other?"

"I have known you for an eternity," broke forth the impetuous Adolphus. "Time is nothing. Do not think of time. When I first saw you, I recognized the soul I had been waiting for. And I have known you long enough since to learn that you are necessary to my happiness."

Marian grew faint. She did not speak, and he continued, —

“I did not send my letter; for how could I endure the suspense of waiting for a reply? I have thought of everything that can conduce to your happiness. I have made arrangements to take charge of the business here. I shall still keep my house in Buffalo, for the town is always so much pleasanter than the country in winter. But I shall fit up the Farnell estate for a summer residence, and live here during a part of the year, near your family and friends, — provided you will consent to be the mistress of my home, as you are of my heart.”

Affrighted, yet flattered, Marian faltered out, “You take me so by surprise! I am such a child yet, — not fitted to be any man’s wife.”

“You are *not* fitted to be the wife of any man whose condition in life would subject you to toil and care. However much I might love you, I should shrink from asking you to share such a lot with me. But you are fitted to be the light and joy of a home of refinement and luxury. In all my experience,” Adolphus added, gazing at her with extravagant fondness and admiration, “I have never known a person so exquisitely adapted to grace and adorn such a home as yourself.”

This did not sound like flattery. Oh no! it was the most refined and delicate appreciation. Had not Marian all her life been made to believe that she was an exceptionally rare and precious flower? And now here was a man who recognized her sweetness and worth at a glance. And he was so considerate! She *was* made to adorn a home of luxury, and *not* to fade in the blighting atmosphere of a poor man’s life. Would inconsiderate Will Rayburn ever be anything but a poor man?

Such thoughts flashed through her mind as she replied,

"It is strange if you have never found a woman to please you before."

"I will be frank with you," said Adolphus. "I have been married. My dear wife—you will not think less of her or me because she was dear to me—has now been dead two years. She left me a son, who is still living. You will not feel less tenderness for him, when I tell you that he is the victim of a sad infirmity, which makes him an object of especial care to me. I have an aunt, a refined and cultivated lady, who will relieve you of the tedious details of house-keeping. I have no other family, no other ties on my heart, dear Marian; which is all yours if you will accept it, and make a lonely man happy."

Then, amid all the perturbations of mind which this meeting and this declaration caused the young girl, there stole up, as from a confused, smouldering mass it was destined to cover, if not consume, the flame of a secret joy. Her spirit flew on wings of trembling and delight to her mother, as she asked for time to consider so serious and unexpected a proposal.

"Certainly," said Mr. Daskill, pausing a little at the gate. "Only assure me of one thing,—that this dear hand is not pledged to any one else."

"Oh, no! it is not," said Marian.

She was terrified at the lie the moment it was spoken. But what else could she have said? And when, reaching the entry-way, she permitted the lips which another had just pressed, to be ravished by this man's turbulent kiss, what else could she do?

She hastened to her mother, and fell upon her neck, and sobbed out the story,—her half-promise to Will Rayburn, which he took for a whole promise, and then Mr. Daskill's proposal; with all about the summer residence here and the winter residence there, and the aunt of cultivated manners,

and the home of refinement and luxury for which a first-class female ornament was required. To all which that fond mother and altogether excellent woman listened, wonder-stricken, forgetting her recent heat and chill and mortification of spirit in the triumph of knowing that the splendid gold-fish she had so hopefully angled for was at last caught.

As for Will Rayburn, it was a pity; Marian had been very indiscreet. "But don't be troubled," quoth the jubilant mamma; "I can manage that."

"Just after he had become converted," said sweet Marian, ruefully.

"I'm glad he has been," Mrs. Fenway replied. "His religion will, I hope, be a comfort to him now. It was through your instrumentality that he met with a change; and you must let that comfort you."

"But Mr. Daskill is *not* a religious man."

"As for that, we will hope for the best. You have led one sinner to see the error of his ways, and you may another. You may be the means of bringing Mr. Daskill into the fold."

As the mother spoke, the daughter saw once more the look of disgust and pitying scorn on Will's face, and she cried out, with shame and tears, imploringly, "O mother, mother, don't let me do anything mean or wicked! I am afraid of myself."

"Well, well!" said Mrs. Fenway, soothingly, "I don't wonder you are a good deal exercised in your mind, after what you have gone through. But I will see to it that everything is made right. Is he in the parlor? I suppose he will be expecting to see me. So go down and keep him company till I come. Of course you will accept him; I consider that as settled. But put him off for a few days: that will make him respect and like you all the more."

Knowing that Miss Fenway would consult her mother, Mr. Daskill felt that his suit was won. He was hungry to

devour this fresh young heart, and his feeling of triumph was scarcely less than that of the wary mother herself. He sat turning over the leaves of an annual, but seeing never a picture and reading never a word, — seeing only the picture of youth and loveliness that had just gone from him, and reading a bright page in the great mystic volume of the future, when he was interrupted by a seemingly trivial but very memorable circumstance.

"Here's something b'longs to you, sir, I guess," said a mellow, girlish voice. And looking up, he saw black Nance holding between thumb and finger a gold ring.

"I think not," said Adolphus. "Where did you get it?"

"Mis' Lorkins picked it up off 'm her floor after you left. She said you lost it when you peeled off your glove."

"I've lost no ring. Why did she think it was mine?"

"Coz it's got the fust letters of your name in it," said Nance. "But if 't aint yourn, then maybe I can have it."

"Give it to me!" said Adolphus, growing interested; and Nance reluctantly put it into his hand.

He examined it closely, the hue of his countenance changing to a dull, lurid purple (the only color he ever blushed, for he never blushed except from violent emotions) as he recognized the fashion of the ring and the engraved initials. The man whom few things in the world could astonish was much astonished then.

The rush of dark blood to his face soon subsided, however, and he began to question Nance. She thought he suspected the temptation to steal the ring which had beset her, and rendered the mystery more mysterious by her confused answers. At last, greatly to her disappointment, and regret for her own unrewarded honesty, she saw him quietly put the ring in his pocket.

"'T wa'n't hisn, no how! it's too little to go on to his littlest finger," she muttered to herself as she went out.

He was turning over the leaves of the annual again, but as soon as he was alone, he once more took out the ring, and regarded it with a darkly troubled look. To many a man's character there is an occult side, undiscerned by the world, perhaps unsuspected by his most intimate friends. Of that side of Adolphus, Marian would have had an interesting glimpse, had she seen him then.

Presently she came in, rosy and smiling as any sweet May morning; and Adolphus greeted her with cloudless, serene, lover-like aspect; each concealing carefully from the other what was gnawing the heart of each. For thus it is the players meet on the great stage of the world, and thus they plight their troths, and thus they wed.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BRIGHT BUBBLE BURSTS.

WITH his last interview with Marian to remember, and the promised one to look forward to, what a happy wight was Will! The intervening time swelled up from the troubled sea of those days like an enchanted island, with the bloom of perpetual dawn upon it, and visited by heavenly airs. A soft spiritual glow surrounded him, like that which colors the world to the poet in his high and happy moods. He saw everything in the beautiful light which his own joy beamed upon it. His heart overflowed with quick sympathies for every living creature, — the men and women he met, the merry school-children, the doves cooing on the roof, the oxen drinking at the roadside trough. His glorious, glad faith was restored; and now a constant incense of thankfulness went up from his heart to the Author of life, with a constant prayer that he might be made good and pure enough to be worthy of her for whom he would have thought it bliss any moment to die, if to live for her had not seemed so much greater bliss. Is it not worth the while to be happy once in one's life, if only for a day?

Saturday morning came, — a beautiful spring-like morning. The bluebirds, earliest comers, sang in the orchard, and the first rays of the sun, shining through the window-blinds of Will's room, ruled the white curtains with gold. He thought it a good omen, and, throwing up the sash, pushed open the blinds for a broader view of the sunrise glory. Even while he did so the world suddenly grew dark, and he looked out on a whirling snow-squall; for it was fickle March weather.

Sun and squall alternated until the afternoon; when, promptly at the appointed hour, Will, this time without his crutch, limped into Lottie's little sitting-room. Mrs. Chilgrove received him with just a bow of recognition, and sat silent, with her customary sewing in hand.

"Where 's Mrs. Lorkins?" Will inquired.

"She has gone up to her mother's," Mrs. Chilgrove replied.

Stitch, stitch. Will looked expectantly from the window, beginning to grow anxious. Then he asked how long Lottie had been gone, and when she would probably return, and got indefinite replies from the coldly civil needle-woman. Some minutes passed. Then the door opened, and the oldest of the three Wintergeen spinsters looked in, from the other part of the house.

"Good afternoon, Miss Abby," said Will.

"Oh! excuse me! I was n't aware!" said Miss Abby as if conscious of having done something highly improper. "I wished to see — but no matter."

"Mrs. Lorkins is out," said Mrs. Chilgrove in her coldest and most impassive tones.

"Oh! indeed! Pardon the intrusion!" And Miss Abby withdrew.

"She was not supposed to know that Lottie was out and somebody else was in," remarked Mrs. Chilgrove icily.

Another silence. Still no Lottie, and no Marian. Will was in no mood for talking; and the lady, though serene and unembarrassed, was altogether too modest and retiring to lead a conversation. Then suddenly the door opened again, and another of the antique Graces looked in.

"Oh! excuse me!" said Eliza Ann, glasses glimmering, curls shaking, and face simpering with confusion at sight of a gentleman and lady alone together. "Is Mrs. Lorkins —"

"Mrs. Lorkins happens to be out at this moment," said Mrs. Chilgrove.

"Oh! indeed! I was n't aware!" And Grace number two retired.

A half-hour had soon passed. Still neither Lottie nor Marian appeared. Then again the door opened, without the slightest premonitory sound, more than if a cat had approached it, and the third pair of spectacles looked in.

"Oh! bless me!" said Maria. "I was — I thought Mrs. Lorkins — has n't she returned? A thousand pardons!"

"Delightful neighbors!" said Mrs. Chilgrove, as the door closed again. "Of course they have no curiosity whatever about anybody but Mrs. Lorkins. And what charming freedom of manners, — to open doors in this way, without the formality of knocking!"

"Their world is very narrow," said Will. "They haven't much to occupy their minds or engage their affections. They are good-hearted creatures, though; and one can excuse in them what would be insufferable in most people."

The lady gave William a still, penetrating look. "You are very charitable," she said, with softening glance and tone.

"It isn't that," he replied; "but I know a good deal of these girls. They were belles of the village thirty years ago. They had a little property, just enough to live on, which they were afraid of losing; and that prevented them from accepting several poor young men who wanted to marry them. The poor young men found other wives, and two of them at least became rich. In the mean while the Wintergreen sisters ceased to be belles, and settled down into these forlorn, fantastic, spectacled, ringleted spinsters you see. For my part, I pity them. I don't wonder that they are curious, and love a bit of gossip. The soul must feed on such miserable husks, if it has nothing better."

As Will spoke, the lady regarded him steadily and earnestly over her work, which she had dropped in her lap.

"I shall think better of them after this," she said. "I thank you for the lesson."

"Pardon me; I did n't mean it for a lesson. Their conduct must appear ridiculous and offensive enough to a stranger. But the more we know of the real history and motives of such persons, — indeed, of any persons we dislike or condemn, — the more tolerant it makes us of their faults, which are often only their misfortunes."

The lady's eyes dilated with a wonderfully intense, searching look, as they still rested on him. Then, after a pause, she said, —

"You interest me. You are different from most men. You are capable of being a true friend. I cannot bear that you should be deceived as you are. Will you let me tell you something which belongs to you to know?"

"What have you to tell me?" said Will, with quick alarm.

"You have come expecting to meet Miss Fenway. Do not expect her any more: she will not come."

"How do you know?"

"After you went out from here the other day, the gentleman from Buffalo came in."

"Mr. Daskell?" said Will, turning pale.

"I believe that is his name. I saw by her agitation how she regarded him. They went away together. Her sister has learned since that he proposed marriage to her on the way home."

"But she — she can't even listen to such a proposal!"

"She has listened to it. You don't know the world; you don't know women," Mrs. Chilgrove replied. "Personal interest is the rule of life everywhere. A man does in business what he believes will be for his ultimate advantage, does n't he? So in politics. Even in religion, all the piety most people have is a selfish desire to save their souls. Don't blame a young girl because she is governed by the same motives."

"This is a horrible view of life!" said Will. It seemed to him that it was his cynical old uncle talking.

"Yes; all the more so because it is true."

"It is a false view, Mrs. Chilgrove. The world is not so bad as that. Selfishness enough I know there is; but I know that there is truth in men and women, — a disinterested love of the good and the right."

These words came glowing from the young man's heart.

"I thought once as you do," the lady tranquilly replied. "It is a beautiful faith. Cultivate it, keep it if you can; but be prepared. If Miss Fenway thinks love in a cottage the most desirable thing in life, she will probably choose you. If she is convinced that pride in a palace is preferable, she will choose another. Pure, unselfish regard for either of you will have nothing to do with her choice. She will sacrifice you, or she will sacrifice him, indifferently."

Will wiped his hot brow. In his earnestness he even rose upon his feet.

"It is infidelity, — it is the worst kind of infidelity you preach!"

The lady smiled, with a marvellous still brightness in her eyes and just the slightest curl of calm disdain on her lips.

"I do not preach anything. I wished simply to tell you the truth, to prepare you for what is certain to come. I do not say there are no exceptions to the rule of self-interest. You are an exception. Miss Fenway is not."

"There's Lottie!" exclaimed Will. "I shall know something now."

"She does n't bring very good news in her face," observed Mrs. Chilgrove.

"A letter!" said Will, as Lottie entered, and, with a sad look, placed a note in his hand.

He tore it open, and read: —

"Will: — In reflecting upon what happened when we saw each other last, I have feared that you quite misunderstood something I

said, you took it so much more seriously than I intended it. I ought to have set you right at the time ; but I felt so much sympathy for you, and you agitated me so, that I was really not myself. The recollection of this has been a source of such grief to me since that I must beg you to forget what passed at that interview, and not try to see me again until we are both wiser and stronger. Will, it afflicts me to give you pain. I could not bring myself to do it until the last moment. Remember that I too suffer ; but believe with me that in the end all will be for the best. Good by.

“ Marian.”

Will read or seemed to read the letter a long time, his eyes wandering over it mistily, and his features settling gradually into an expression of deep and powerful calm.

“ It is all over,” he said , and, tearing the letter, he cast the fragments into the fire.

They flashed up into a quick flame and vanished.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WILL LOSES HIS SITUATION.

THIS time the foundations of the young man's faith were not shaken, but deepened and strengthened. Out of suffering and renunciation came, if not happiness, a clear perception of duty and a mighty power of will. What Mrs. Chilgrove had said might be true of men and the churches, of *man* and the *church* it was the reverse of true.

"I will stand for *man*, even if alone in the world!" he vowed to himself; not egotistically, but from an overwhelming conviction of the hollowness and vanity of everything in life that did not centre in truth and brotherly love.

All the remainder of that day and night, and the Sunday which followed, he spent in solitary thought. Sunday night he slept tranquilly and long, and awoke afterwards calm and refreshed. At breakfast he told his mother that he was going to the store.

"Why need you?" she remonstrated. "You know Mr. Daskill said your pay was to go on the same."

"For that reason I must be at my post as soon as possible. I shall not be able to stand on my foot much; but I can do something."

"Oh now! I think you are very unwise."

"Mother," Will replied, with perfect respect and gentleness, "I am wiser than you. Let that be understood; and whatever I may do henceforth, do not question or oppose me."

Reporting for duty at the store, he noticed that Mr. Emmons was cool to him. Nevertheless, he cheerfully took his

old place behind the counter, and managed to wait upon such customers as came. All were glad to see him back again; for the frank and obliging manners of the young salesman had made him a favorite with all who frequented the store.

Early in the forenoon, Grand-Seigneur Daskill appeared. He had not yet been formally accepted by Miss Fenway; and at sight of his rival, fresh, and active on his feet once more, I hardly know what his emotions may have been. He knew how susceptible Miss Fenway was, and had to acknowledge to himself that this fellow was deucedly good-looking, besides being at least fifteen years younger than himself.

But Adolphus was a person of tact and gentlemanly manners.

"Ah, William!" he said, in his large, flowing way, "glad to see you! I hope you have n't got out too soon."

"I think not," said Will.

"Well, take it easy; health and comfort before everything." And the Grand Seigneur passed on into the counting-room with Mr. Emmons.

After a while he came out again, and said to William, in the presence of customers (a little audience always served as inspiration to the large-minded, generous Adolphus), —

"I'm concerned about that ankle. Don't be on it too much, my lad. I'm going to Buffalo this afternoon, and I intend to bring down a horse and carriage in a few days, when I shall insist on your having some rides. The horse will need the exercise, and so will you while your foot is healing."

The liberal, whole-souled man! It seemed a wonder that Will was not more impressed by his kindness, and that he did not thank him more profusely.

In the afternoon Mrs. Wetherspun came to buy some cotton cloth. Since Ward Farnell left the business, she never traded with anybody but William, if she could help it; "that

smooth-tongued Emmons was *so* disagreeable!" and she detested "them snipper-snapper boys." But William Rayburn was always ready to show her things, and "talk 'em over," which was what she liked.

"Now, William," said she, having looked at two or three kinds of cloth, and learned the prices, "have ye got anything different?"

"Yes; we have this." And William tumbled a heavy roll on the counter.

Quality and price seemed to please good Mrs. Wetherspun.

"Why did n't ye show me this before? It's the best of the lot, and the cheapest, too!"

"I think it is the poorest and dearest."

"William Rayburn!" exclaimed the customer, with a scowl. "I alluz thought your judgment was toler'ble good, and you never tried to deceive me, as I know on; but jest look at it! Any gump can see that this cloth is heavier an' whiter 'n' t' other at the same price."

"It looks so; but it is not what it appears. I did n't show it to you before because I 'm not willing to sell you for cloth what is not cloth."

Mrs. Wetherspun looked at the stuff again, and then at William, in sour-faced astonishment.

"You mean to tell me this ain't cloth, when I 've got eyes of my own in my head!"

"There is a foundation of cloth; the rest is something else. See here, Mrs. Wetherspun."

William rubbed smartly a corner of the piece. A white dust flew, and the fabric, before solid and stiff in appearance, became loose and flimsy.

"Massy sakes! Ward Farnell never had no sich stuff as that in his store."

"Yes, he had once; and my mother bought some of it. She set out to make it up before washing it. but it dulled

her needles, and broke them. Then she boiled it, and found that only a sleazy remnant remained ; a good part of it had washed away."

"Do tell me!" said the amazed Mrs. Wetherspun. "How do they make it?"

"I'll tell you what little I know of it," replied William. "It is pretty fair cloth when it comes from the factory, but it has not been whitened, and there is not nearly so much of it. The wholesale jobber sends it to a bleachery : it is not only to be bleached, but it must be made to measure more. Besides the singeing, and soaking, and churning in the dash-weel, and boiling in lime-water, and steeping in chloride of lime, — besides this and the other treatment it gets, in the way of bleaching, it is put upon frames and stretched. The bleaching process reduces the weight of a yard of cloth a little ; the stretching reduces it a great deal. After a yard has been extended so as to measure a yard and a quarter, more or less, it is so thin that an experienced housekeeper, like you, Mrs. Wetherspun, would n't look twice at it. So, to restore the lost weight, and put, so to speak, flesh on the skeleton, it is passed through a sticky porridge of white clay, and I don't know what other substances. Then, nicely calendered, it goes back to the jobber. From the jobber it goes to the retailer : and from the retailer to you, Mrs. Wetherspun, if you want it."

"And when I think I'm buyin' cloth, I'm buyin' clay! William Rayburn, it don't seem possible, in a Christian age like this."

"The last time I was in Buffalo," replied Will, "I had the curiosity to go out and visit a bleachery that extends cloth in this way. The manager was charmingly frank with me when I asked him why the cloth was stretched. He smiled at my simplicity, and said, 'To make more of it.' Then when I asked why it was loaded with earthy material, he replied, 'Folks like to think they are buying a strong, heavy kind of

cloth.' 'But,' I said, 'they're buying clay!' 'That's their lookout,' said he. Mrs. Wetherspun, we must n't expect too much of this Christian age. When I came home, I talked with Mr. Farnell about it, and he declared no more of that cloth should ever come into this store. It is here again,—by some mistake, I trust. I am here to sell it; but whoever buys it of me,—or buys anything else of me,—shall know what I am selling, if I know it myself."

Mrs. Wetherspun concluded to purchase some strong, unbleached cloth, which William thought the best of any for her purpose, and went away, "thankful enough," as she declared, "that she had n't been cheated into breakin' her needles and tryin' to make shirts for her husband out of clay."

That evening, when William had put on his coat to go home, Mr. Emmons called him into the counting-room.

"I'm afraid," said the head clerk, "that attendance in the store is too hard on your lame foot, and I've concluded to dispense with your services."

"You need n't put it sarcastically, Mr. Emmons," William replied. "If you mean that I am discharged, say just that."

"Well, I say just that, then," said Mr. Emmons shortly.

"And don't lay any more to my lame foot than it deserves. I shall be asked the reason for my discharge, and I should like to know it myself."

"You don't suit us. That's all."

"You and I, Mr. Emmons, have always got along well together until now. I must infer, then, that I don't suit Mr. Daskill. You are his thermometer; I felt your mercury very low towards me when I came in this morning. He was unnecessarily cordial, or perhaps I should say patronizing; but he talked very differently with you in this room. You have been waiting for a pretext to get rid of me. You did n't have to wait long. I was not pleased to see that sham cotton on the shelves again; and I was willing that you

should overhear what I said of it to Mrs. Wetherspun. Indeed, if false fabrics like that are to be in the store to be sold as true fabrics, I prefer to be out of it."

"It is not becoming in a salesman to abuse, in the presence of customers, goods they have come to purchase," said Mr. Emmons nervously.

"It is not becoming in any man," William answered calmly, "to act a lie. That is what you do when you allow such goods to pass over your counter. That is what you are doing now in dealing with me. You dare not give me your true reason for sending me off. You don't respect me less because I told a customer that one piece of goods was a cheat, and sold her another which I believed to be worth her money. And you know that in a business like this, fair dealing is as much for the advantage of the store, in the long run, as it is for that of the customer."

William paused, to compel an answer. Mr. Emmons was much flushed, and his white fingers trembled as he counted some money on the desk.

"Yes," he replied, after a pause, "as you say, William, my feeling toward you has always been friendly."

"I think so," said William. "So it comes down to this: I was to be discharged. Mr. Daskill didn't care to assume the responsibility of an act which, under the circumstances, could n't reflect much honor on himself; so he shifts it upon you."

"Why should he want to get rid of you?" Mr. Emmons asked.

William smiled. "If you do not guess the reason now, you will when the promised horse and carriage come. They are not to take *me* to ride. But he might have spared you this pain,—for I really believe it gives you pain, Mr. Emmons, to do me this injustice. It was not necessary to reduce me to a poor young man, out of business and without pros-

pects; I should not have been long in his way. But I suppose it would n't be pleasant for him to see me constantly, as he would have to if I remained his clerk. I can't blame him. And I shall not cherish the least ill-feeling towards you, Mr. Emmons. Is this my pay?"

The head clerk pushed the money towards him. After a glance at it, William said, "This is all that is due me?"

"You have been absent some three weeks, you remember," Mr. Emmons replied.

William smiled again. "I have reason to remember! Curiously, I dreamed that Mr. Daskill came and said to me that my pay should go on the same while I was laid up with a lame foot got in that way. I hardly expected that such a dream would come true; and I am better satisfied *not* to be paid for those three weeks. Mr. Emmons, I hope we part good friends."

"Yes, William," said the head clerk tremulously. "And I am sorry for you."

"Oh, don't be sorry for *me*!" replied William frankly and cheerfully. "The earning of a few dollars is a small matter, and time is very short. But a man's integrity and self-respect are *not* small matters. Did you ever think of it, Mr. Emmons? I should be sorry for myself if I stayed and compromised mine; just as I am sorry — sincerely sorry — for you. Shall we shake hands, Mr. Emmons?"

This was a turn of affairs which the autocratic head clerk — invested with "full powers" in the Grand Seigneur's absence — had not anticipated. Instead of maintaining his proudly superior position, he found himself humbled and abashed in the presence of this strong, kind, unresentful, courageous youth. He shook the proffered hand with a few feeble, deprecatory words, and William went out to take leave of the boys.

CHAPTER XIX.

LEAVE-TAKINGS.

WILLIAM did not tell his mother what had happened until they sat together at breakfast the next morning.

"I suppose you will have your own way," she said querulously, "and go to the store again, now you have begun."

"No, mother," William replied. "I am not going to the store to-day."

"Oh," she said, rather surprised than pleased, after all. She liked to have something to complain of; and, really convinced that he was in the right the day before, she was sorry to have gained her point. "You found it too much for your foot, did n't you? Does your pay go on the same?"

This was a very important question with Widow Rayburn.

"No, mother, my pay does n't go on at all. It has n't gone on for the past three weeks. We were quite mistaken about it."

"But, my son," she exclaimed, "Mr. Daskill, he said—"

"Mr. Daskill is a man of fine words, mother. There is an old saying about fine words. In short, mother, I don't suit Mr. Daskill, and I am discharged."

The widow set down her teacup, and stared at her son with as much consternation as if he had told her that the store with all its contents had been swallowed by an earthquake.

"You don't mean you are turned off?"

"Yes, mother, I mean precisely that. Now don't let this little matter trouble you, and I will tell you all about it."

The thin, white face under the widow's plain cap and scanty gray hair grew thinner and whiter than ever as she

listened to her son's story, and appeared all in a tremor of tearful emotion at its close.

"A little matter, my son!" she repeated, wiping her eyes. "To lose your situation, and be thrown out of employment for nobody knows how long! It does seem to me it might have been avoided. Why should you have interfered if the store had such goods to sell, and Mrs. Wetherspun came to buy? Who is she that you should lose your place on her account?"

"You seem to have forgotten how *you* felt when *you* bought some of that kind of cloth and tried to use it," replied William. "I did by her as I would have had any honest clerk do by you. I know a little cloth isn't of much importance; and I don't care particularly for Mrs. Wetherspun. But I once had a vision of something that seemed to me exceedingly important; and it was neither cloth nor week's wages, nor you nor I, dear mother. You won't understand me. But let this comfort you: I should soon have been turned off on some other pretext, if not on that one; and this misfortune is only the beginning of my fortunes."

"I don't see how that can be," complained the widow. "How we are going to live, I don't know!"

"Why, mother, look at our neighbors, the Farnells. They have no income except what one brave young woman earns. Now, you have a small income; enough, at least, to furnish you tea and sugar and flour, without any help from me. But do you imagine that I, a young man in perfect health, with ordinarily good faculties, am less capable of earning bread for two in the family than Julia Farnell for four?"

"Don't you think something besides a bare sustenance is needed?" said the widow.

"Yes, and I hope to earn it. But for myself, I don't care for it to-day as I did three days ago. Then I hoped soon — but all that is over with," said William resolutely.

“What are you going to do?”

“I don’t know yet, but I think I had better go away from here for a little while. I’ve some money of my own with which I think of making a little journey and seeing what I can do in Buffalo, or Rochester, or perhaps New York. Don’t fear a long separation,” William went on, observing his mother’s distress. “Either you shall come to me, or I will return to you, before many months. If I can do no better, why, I can always earn a living with a scythe or a hoe.”

William remained at home that day, showing his mother many little kindnesses, and preparing the house for his absence, — clearing the cellar, looking over the apples and potatoes, and doing everything he could think of to forestall her missing him too much. Bravely as he talked, his heart was full of grief and tenderness at the thought of leaving her. In the mean time, she got ready his clothing for the journey, much as if she had been making his shroud.

Towards night he went to engage a boy to come occasionally and cut kindlings for her, and do whatever else was needed at his hands. On the way back he met a rickety little figure in a long, black cloak, carrying a staff, and stopped in front of it. The figure stopped ; and from between fur collar and fur cap peered up a weazened old face, fine and pointed as a mink’s.

“Uncle Carolus,” said William, “I bid you good evening.”

“Good evening, yourself, beggar !” squeaked the old man sharply. “You want something of me, I suppose. You never would stop me in the street, if you did n’t.”

“Yes, I do want something of you, uncle.”

“Uncle ! uncle !” chattered old Carolus, brandishing the staff under his cloak, “don’t *uncle* me !” and he struck the ground so violently that the blow came near sending him over backwards. “Well, what is it ? what is it ?” as he tottering regained his balance. “Come to the point.”

"I want to ask your pardon," said William.

"My pardon?" the old man shrieked out. "Pardon be d—d! What do you want to ask my pardon for?"

"For doing you injustice, uncle. I don't think I ever quite understood you till lately. I used to think you the meanest, most selfish, most unprincipled man in the world — or anywhere about here, at least. I think I told you so on one or two occasions."

"So you did; d—n it, you did, Will. And now you've changed your mind?"

"So far as this, uncle. I find there are other people as unprincipled as you are, only they are not half so frank. They cover up their baseness; you don't. I like you for that."

"Oh, you do!" snarled old Carolus. "Anything more?"

"I feel more kindly towards you than I did," said William, in tones far more kind than his words. "As I am going away, I want to tell you so, and feel that we part in a more friendly way than we did the last time."

"Ugh!" the old man gave a swinish grunt. "And this is all you have to ask? Don't want the old sinner's money?"

"No, uncle, and I never did. There is where you always mistook my mother and me. You thought we hated you, and wanted your money. We hated you enough; but I never wanted a dollar of yours. I don't hate you now."

"Don't you, Will?" cried the old man eagerly. "Don't hate your miserable, greedy, grinding, griping old uncle? For that's what you called me!"

"I hate your principles," William answered, "as much as ever, — worse than ever. But I don't hate you, uncle. I can't say that I love you much, but I would gladly do you good if I could; I say it humbly and sincerely. And I sincerely wish you good by."

"Going, are you? I heard you was out of business, and d—d if I did n't think you'd come a-begging. Don't you

want fifty dollars? Come, I'll show you I ain't such a hard-hearted old curmudgeon, after all. I never thought I'd do it; but by Jehoshaphat! I'll give ye fifty dollars!"

With shaking hand the grimacing old miser actually took out his pocket-book. William was touched.

"I agree with you in one thing, uncle, — I never thought you would. That's another instance of my injustice to you. Uncle Carolus, if people understood each other better, they would hate each other less. I see you have a great deal more kindness in your heart for me than I ever dreamt of."

"I have, I have, Will! And I'll make it seventy-five, — a hundred, if you say so."

"No, no! I don't want your money, uncle, and I can't take it. Put up your pocket-book. I thank you just the same, and I shall carry away a very different impression of you from what I had."

"Well, well! if you won't, you won't!" The old man clapped his money quickly into his pocket, and the old, avaricious gleam came into his face again. "I'll keep my bank-notes!" He seemed to think they had met with a narrow escape. "Hundred dollars don't grow on every bush," triumphantly slapping his pocket. "You'll find that out."

"It is n't every bush that I would care to take them from," replied William.

"From an old, scratchy bramble like me, for instance. Well, well! you may come to it. I heard of your being turned out of Daskill's store. He's got your girl, too, they say; cuts you out, and then kicks you out, he!"

Over the hand that held the cane the old man rubbed the other, with a reminiscence of the wicked glee he had felt when he first heard of his nephew's misfortunes. Then he cursed Daskill. Will left him cackling and cursing, and walked on.

Passing Ward Farnell's house, he went in. Julia, who met

him at the door, pressed his hand in silence, and drew him into the sitting-room. He divined from that touch, from her wistful face, full of the tenderest concern and sweet good-will, perhaps even more from something intangible and unseen that went from her to him, that she knew all, or almost all. A great wave of sympathy swept over him, and heaved the depths which had remained calm through mighty troubles. Strange, how sometimes the heart, which is granite to the buffets of the storm, turns to wax at a glance, and melts at a single thrilling beam from the right soul.

"I thought I was a man," said Will, as soon as he could speak, "but you make a child of me, you see! O Julia, I have suffered! But I am not so weak as I appear. I am reconciled to everything. But I loved her, I loved her, Julia!"

"Loved?" said Julia, emphasizing the past tense.

"I don't say I do not love her any more," he replied. "But I give her up. I am going away."

Julia's countenance changed. After a little while she said, —

"I can't blame you, William. I thought you would go. I heard how you left the store. *She* has heard of it too."

Will looked up with quick interest.

"You have talked with her?"

"Yes, this afternoon. She was very much distressed at what had occurred, but defended Mr. Daskill; she would not believe he had anything to do with it. She declares that, on his return, he will have you restored to your position, even if Mr. Emmons has to go."

Will smiled, and shook his head.

"It is well for her to think so. No!" he suddenly exclaimed, "it is not well. It is better for her and everybody to know the truth. Did she tell you it was all over between us?"

"She said she supposed it was. O Will, she loves you, and this dreadful thing ought not to be!"

"Don't! don't! don't!" pleaded Will, putting up his hand defensively, and turning away his face. "I have done all I can. I could not respect myself if I remained, whining and entreating, now. She will go her own way. I go mine. It is settled."

Julia was weeping silently. Tears were still in her voice as she said, —

"A single phrase of Shakspeare has been running in my mind all day, — 'The pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!' I had no other words to say, when I parted from Marian. 'Oh, the pity of it, the pity of it!' She is so sweet and beautiful! only weak, William, very weak and foolish, I know. But she has so many admirable and charming traits! And you — I don't know anybody else so well fitted to guide her, strengthen her, and make her happy."

"Don't talk to me in that way!" Will exclaimed. "Do you mean to shake my very soul?"

"Forgive me," said Julia. "I ought not to. But my heart keeps saying, 'The pity of it! Oh, the pity of it!' Well, I give it up now, too. Where are you going?"

"I don't know yet. I am sorry for one thing; those French lessons must be postponed."

"Perhaps they will come around yet," said Julia sadly. "When do you go?"

"To-morrow morning, by the first stage."

"So soon? Oh, then it is all over, indeed!"

CHAPTER XX.

MARIAN'S ADVENTURE.

THE railroad station was three miles away; but there was a regular Waybrook stage connecting with the principal trains. After parting with Julia, William started to walk around to the coach-office to leave his order for the morning, when, as he passed the fork factory, he met Miles Fenway coming out.

"Well! how is this, William?" said Miles, in his open, cordial way. "I hear you've lost your place."

"I heard," said William, "that the place had lost me! I'm glad we've met, for I want to thank you for all your kindness and bid you good by."

"You are off, William! where? when?"

"To Buffalo, in the first place. I am just now going to the office to order the morning stage to pick me up."

"This is n't quite right, William, I'm afraid."

"There are a good many things in this world, Mr. Fenway, that don't seem quite right, but perhaps we shall find they are pretty nearly right in the end; certainly, if we act our part as becomes us."

"But—how is it?" cried Miles. "Some say you were turned off because you refused to sell some sham goods; others, that Emmons had positive orders to discharge you. Which story is correct?"

"I don't know; perhaps both. I was to be got rid of on some pretext, I suppose, and the sham goods afforded a convenient one."

"In either case, it is a most outrageous, dishonorable transaction! I would n't have believed it after what Mr.

Daskill said to you the evening of your accident. By the way, did you get pay for the time you were laid up, as he promised?"

"What do you think?" said Will, with a smile.

"I wish Daskill was here!" exclaimed Miles, with a good deal more warmth than he was accustomed to show. "I'd have one plain talk with him."

"Talking is his strong point," laughed Will. "He would beat you."

"I can't like the idea of your going!" Mr. Fenway resumed. "What's the need of it? If you want something to do, — look here! come into my shop. I want just such a straightforward, active, intelligent fellow as you to keep my accounts and look after things in general; I can't pay you great wages, but I'll give you as good a chance as I can."

A quick emotion struggled in Will's face.

"I can stand anything but such kindness!" he said as he grasped Miles's hand; "but I think I had better go, for a while, anyway; there are reasons why it would n't be well for me to be here until — until everything is over with. Mr. Daskill told me the very day I was discharged, and that was yesterday, — how long ago it seems! — that he was going to bring down a horse and carriage, and give me some rides. Instead of getting the rides, if I stayed I should get spattered with mud as he drove by with somebody at his side I should n't care to see."

"Perhaps you are right, William," said Miles sadly. "Things are not — and perhaps they won't be — as I would have them; but remember, there's a place in my shop for you whenever you like to come and take it."

"That will be a great comfort for me to think of," said Will gratefully.

"And see here, William! — But never mind now — I was going to make a proposition, but maybe I might n't be able to carry it out."

They parted like father and son, and Miles went home with a more sadly stern and dissatisfied countenance than he was wont to show.

"Do you know," he said at the supper-table, "Daskill has sent Will Rayburn adrift?"

The thing was pretty well known, and had been talked over by mother and daughter, as their flushed and troubled faces betrayed. Mrs. Fenway came up quickly to the defence of her favorite.

"The idea!" she said, "that Mr. Daskill has sent anybody adrift. How absurd! when he is away, and has nothing to do with the matter. Mr. Emmons has full charge in his absence, as he has told me himself; and it's all his doings."

"I've known Emmons, boy and man, for almost twenty years," said Miles. "He's a timid, ambitious, cringing creature, — just the kind to be made a tool of where he sees an advantage to be gained, but too feeble to take any bold and open course on his own account. Then this must be on Daskill's account."

"Miles Fenway!" cried madam in a sudden blaze. "I wish you would say *Mr.* Daskill."

"I beg your pardon, — *Mr.* Daskill," said the gentle Miles.

"Do set a more respectful example before the boys! And don't be so absurd as to make such charges, after you yourself have told how generous he was, offering to pay Will Rayburn his regular wages when he was laid up. I think I never in my life heard of anything more noble than that."

"I did n't regard it as anything very extraordinary, but I wished to do the man justice."

"Well, do him justice now, then!"

"In that case, I must add the climax to that story. Will has not been paid, as Daskill — beg pardon again, *Mr.* Daskill — promised; and he never will be."

"How do you know, Miles Fenway?"

"I've talked with Will himself. I asked him the question, and he smiled. I know what such a smile as that means."

"Well!" said Mrs. Fenway, "if he has n't been paid, that shows Mr. Daskill had nothing to do with it, and knew nothing about it. He'll make it right when he comes back, I'm positive!"

"He will be too late. Will is going off. He leaves to-morrow morning by the first stage. Nobody knows when he'll come back, —if ever."

Marian, who had been listening to the conversation in silent distress, gave her father a quick, frightened look; then, suddenly rising from the table, left the room.

"Miles Fenway,"—madam caught up a plate in her trembling little hand, but put it down again, and cast hard words instead,—"you're an unnatural father! you're a cruel man!"

"My dear," said Miles, in a level, gentle voice, fixing her with his melancholy gaze, "I hope it may turn out in the end that you have been no more cruel than I."

"To say things to agitate that poor child so, and unsettle her mind!" snapped Mrs. Fenway.

"She was agitated when I came in; so were you. And, it seems to me, her mind has been a good deal unsettled of late, without my help," observed Miles.

Mrs. Fenway flung back from the table and left the room. She found Marian in her chamber, with a tearless, pale face, putting on her bonnet and veil. Madam was mild as milk in a moment.

"Why, my dear child! where are you going?"

"I am stifled!" said Marian. "I must get a breath of air, or I shall go wild!"

"The house *is* close!" Mrs. Fenway ran to throw open a window. "Don't go out this evening, child!"

"I want to see Julia Farnell a minute. I shall feel better." And, in spite of her mother's entreaties, Marian went.

"I don't know what I am here for," she said to Julia, as they met in the entry. "I am very unhappy! He is going away; did you know it?"

"Yes," replied Julia, "he was here two hours ago to bid me good by."

"He don't come to bid me good by!" said Marian, with a pang of jealousy. "I should like to see him. Not that we can ever be to each other again as we were once, but I think he has not been used quite right, by others as well as by me. O Julia, my heart aches to think of it — and that he is going off so! I may never see him again! Does he go by the first coach?"

"So he said. His mind seemed quite made up about it. I don't think anything can change his resolution."

Marian stood, pale and panting, by the door. Such beauty in such distress was pitiful to see.

"Go up to my room," Julia urged.

"I have n't time; I must go back; my mother is waiting. Did he speak of me?"

"He spoke very kindly of you, Marian. He thinks you are misled and deceived; but he has no hard feelings towards you."

"He has a beautiful soul, a noble heart!" said Marian in a whisper. "Is there another such in the world?"

"I don't know of one," Julia answered fervently.

There was a painful pause, — Marian panting, and pulling a finger of her glove to pieces; Julia, with a face all pity, looking on.

"What would you do, Julia?" Marian asked at length, with a scared, faint smile.

"If he — that is, if one I loved — loved me so, and I had

wronged him, and he left me, I would follow him around the globe!" said Julia.

"I did n't mean that," said Marian, thrilled with deep and secret joy. "I could never do as you could. O Julia, I have often thought, if he had only loved you!"

"If he had," replied Julia, with a sweet, impassioned look, "do you think—" But she checked herself. "He will never love anybody as he has loved Marian Fenway. You will have that thought to comfort you."

"Poor comfort!" said Marian. "He will forget me in a little while, as I deserve. O Julia, it has done me good to see you; and now I must not trouble you any more. I *must* go back to my mother."

But, after parting from her friend, Marian did not immediately return home. Drawing the veil over her bonnet, she walked on quickly towards the Widow Rayburn's house. There was a light in the kitchen, the curtain was up; and there stood the widow, solitary and sorrowful, bending over her ironing-board.

"Something for Will's journey," thought Marian. "He may be out. Oh! if I should meet him!"

She glanced up and down the street, and stopped. Presently somebody else entered the kitchen. It was Will himself, bearing a small travelling-trunk by both handles. The widow turned to speak to him as he set it down. Marian's heart beat so wildly that she grew faint, and leaned on the gate.

A frantic impulse seized her to go in; and, as if afraid of yielding to it if she remained, she walked hurriedly on. She had gone but a little way, however, when she turned back. The fascination was too great; she must look at him once more,—stand out there in the cold night, under the stars, and watch him through the window, and bid him an eternal farewell in her heart.

By that time mother and son had both sat down. The widow's face was turned, so that it could not be seen from the street; but up to it, now and then, went hand and handkerchief, in sorrowful pantomime. Will was gravely talking. How calmly cheerful, how purely good he looked!

"Oh! he does n't dream I am so near!" thought Marian. "If he did, would he care?" Then a cold dread fell upon her, that she was not at all in his mind or in his heart; that henceforth new interests possessed him; that she had lost him indeed.

Footsteps on the wooden sidewalk alarmed her, and she walked away again. A tall man was approaching; he stopped at the widow's gate and entered the house; then Marian went back, and once more peering into the window from the street, saw, not Will, but her own father, sitting in the chair where Will had sat. It seemed strange to her that he could walk in on friendly terms where she could not; that his presence there made it impossible for her now to go in, whatever she might have done before.

"Suppose he had come and found me there?" she thought; and, alarmed at the danger she had escaped, she hurried home.

Mrs. Fenway met her with many questions, and abounded in words of counsel and consolation; to all which Marian, listening with a sick and stricken countenance, had little to say. Complaining of headache at last, she begged to be left alone, and went to bed.

But instead of putting out the light, she placed it near her pillow, and there read over and over again, with kisses and tears, all Will's letters to her, which she had never yet had the resolution to destroy; then she extinguished the lamp, and lay with them clasped tightly to her bosom, in the dark and silent room. She tried in vain to sleep; at last, in an access of passionate despair, she rose and went to the

window, and looked away in the misty starlight towards Will's home, and stretched out her arms to him, saying very softly, "O Will, come to me! come to me! come to me!" Then she listened, and heard only the roaring of the dam not far away. All the village slept; even Will was probably asleep, and at peace. In the whole calm universe was there another being so wretched and forlorn as she?

Trembling with cold, she withdrew from the window and returned to her bed. But she was now afraid to fall asleep, lest she might not awaken early enough in the morning; for she had formed a wild resolution.

She did sleep a little in spite of herself; but there was no danger of her sleeping too long; she was awake and dressed in the gray dawn; and looking in her glass, was surprised to find that she had not lost all her freshness and fairness of face, after such a night. Fever counterfeited health, and gave her cheeks a soft, deceptive bloom. She appeared in good spirits at the breakfast-table, but left it soon and stole out of the house in an old-fashioned long shawl which she had seldom worn, and a thick blue veil completely covering her head.

She met several persons she knew, but nobody recognized her in that disguise. Walking a little stiffly and a little bent, she passed over the bridge and up the street to the coach-office; where going in she sat down to wait. As soon as the coach drove up to the door, she went out and got into it, huddling herself closely in a corner, wrapped in her veil and shawl.

"When he gets in," thought she, "will he know me?" If he did not, should she let herself be known? She had not made up her mind as to that; to ride in the same coach with him, to be near him, perhaps by his very side, to look at him and wait for something she scarcely dared hope for or name to her own heart,—that was all she thought of now.

There was no other passenger at the start, when the driver,

having come and looked in at her, slammed the door and mounted his box.

"Will they take *him* up the first one?" she wondered. Perhaps there would be no one else in the coach; they two alone together! Oh, if that should happen!

The coach went its rounds, picking up three or four express bundles, and one old woman, who took her seat in the farthest corner opposite Marian. Then it rolled away toward Widow Rayburn's house. The girl looked forward through her veil with breathless expectation; then backward with blank dismay. The coach had not stopped at all, but gone straight by. And not a face was to be seen at window or door.

She wanted to call out to the driver, and ask him if had not neglected a certain order. But what a foolish act that would have been! Will might go over by some other conveyance. Or perhaps he had changed his mind, and would not go at all; could it be in consequence of anything her father might have said to him?

For a moment she wished herself out of the coach, and safe in her room at home. But with reflection came a different thought. This coach, in order to hit two trains, started an hour earlier than was necessary for the one Will was to take. It carried passengers also to the earlier train going east, waiting at the station during the interval, and carrying back passengers from both. It seemed now to Marian that she must see Will, if only for a moment, even though she did not speak to him; she would, therefore, keep the coach, watch for him while it waited at the station (hoping he had indeed changed his mind and would not go), and then ride back to whatever fate was to be.

The morning was fresh and spring-like. The snow was mostly gone from the wheat-fields, which came out green from their winter covering. Along the hillsides hung shreds of

softest mist, faintly tinged by the early sunshine. Bluebirds and even robins were singing by the roadside, and from the wooded heights came the wild, musical cawing of crows among the maples and pines. Even Marian, preoccupied as she was, could not but feel the exhilaration of the chill, sweet day.

There were no signs of Will on the road or at the station. Marian handed the driver double fare, saying as he stared at her, that she had come to meet a friend, and intended to go back in the coach.

"Miss Fenway, ain't it?" he said, recognizing the voice, through all disguise.

When the eastern train arrived he stood by the coach, watching some passengers who got off.

"Wal! he did n't come, did he?" said he, after the last had stepped on the platform. "Though maybe 't ain't *him* you're expectin'. Excuse me, Miss Fenway!" And he went off, grinning sheepishly.

Was then her intrigue with Adolphus so well known that she should be suspected by a common stage-driver of having come out there in that plight to meet him on his return to Waybrook? A still more startling thought followed: what if Mr. Daskill had chanced to come, and found her in the coach!

The train was off, and they waited for the next. It was a long and dreary hour to Marian; and, her excitement subsiding, she marvelled at herself for being there. At last the distant whistle was heard, and still Will had not come.

Then, just as the train approached the platform, two men in a wagon drove up. One man was her father, the other was Will. There was the small travelling-trunk beside. For such was the result of the proposition which Miles Fenway did not make to the young man when they parted the evening before on the street, but afterwards put to him in these words, when he called at the widow's house: "I've got to drive over

to the depot in the morning, Will, and I may as well go early enough to take you to the train. That will save your fare in the coach, and give you an hour longer with your mother. I'll countermand your order at the office on my way back." Will had gladly accepted the offer; and thus Marian had her morning ride alone.

She saw him, nevertheless, if that was any satisfaction. While Mr. Fenway delivered the trunk to the baggage-master, Will bought his ticket; then snatching his check, he shook hands with the tall Miles, and swung himself upon the platform of a car, where he stood looking back as the train started.

Marian had previously opened the coach window. She now, in that supreme moment of love and despair, threw up her veil. Will had a momentary glimpse of that beautiful, beseeching, sad face, as the train bore him away.

CHAPTER XXI.

ENGAGED.

WHEN Adolphus returned, after a week's absence, he expressed great surprise at the change which had been made in the store.

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Fenway triumphantly, "I knew just what you would say! And about William's pay, which was to have gone on in his absence, but which they say he did n't receive?"

"I was never more chagrined at anything in my life," replied Adolphus, with convincing candor. "Having no expectation of his leaving us, I neglected to say anything to Mr. Emmons about that. But it is n't too late. I suppose we have lost William, — and a very serious loss I consider it, — but he shall have the money. I'll send it around to his mother this very day."

Oh, the large-souled, magnanimous man! If only Marian and Mr. Fenway could have heard him talk! We may be sure, however, that he lost nothing in the report Mrs. Fenway made to them of his noble words. It was not until long after that the matter of sending so trifling a sum to William's mother was found, after all, to have escaped the great man's memory.

The horse (which Will was not to ride after until long afterwards) was at the door, and Marian was putting on her things to go out with her newly returned lover, when this conversation between him and Mrs. Fenway took place. She was a long time getting ready; she felt that the occasion was full of fate for her, and her mind, more than her person, needed to be prepared.

She knew he would press his suit: what should she answer him? At one moment an overpowering impulse seized her to tell him everything, even what she had not yet told her mother, of her ride to the railroad that March morning, and her last sight of Will. Would he not pity her and counsel her what to do? If he wished to marry her after that, she would not refuse him. But would he wish it? Pity her he might, but would he not scorn her more?

Mrs. Fenway came to her assistance, and poured the story of Mr. Daskill's generosity into a willing ear. Having lost the man who had her heart, Marian desired now to think well of him who flattered her pride.

"If he urges you to-day, I would n't put him off any longer," whispered mamma.

"But what shall I do?" said Marian. "I feel that I ought to tell him something, for my own peace of mind. I want him to know before —"

"He knows all he need to, you may be sure of that," Mrs. Fenway broke in. "It is taken for granted that a girl like you must have had admirers. It's a terrible weapon a woman places in the hands of the man who is to be her husband, when she confesses to him a previous attachment."

"I think that depends upon the kind of man he is," replied Marian. "I should be afraid of a husband I could n't tell everything to. I should live in constant dread of his finding out what I ought to have confessed."

It was a relief to her conscience to talk that way. Yet her mother had little fear of her being so frank with Adolphus. She went down-stairs charmingly attired, and though somewhat pale and worn-looking, sweet and smiling as only she could be.

The mother watched her with pride and joy as she rode away with her lover; and met her, with an eager, questioning face, on her return.

"Have you?" she whispered.

And Marian gave a little nod and a sweet, sad smile.

The engagement was not publicly announced for some weeks yet, but it soon became evident to the little world at Waybrook that Mr. Daskill's suit had met with favor. The air of him as he walked the humble wooden sidewalk, or drove his clipped and mouse-colored horse in his light buggy through the streets of the village, was not the air of a desponding lover, by any means. Ribbons and whip in hand, his head thrown well back and inclined slightly to one side, in an attitude at once easy and arrogant, with his sagacious, half-closed eyes regarding critically the creature's paces, after the manner of a connoisseur of horse-flesh; often with the dog Romeo by his side, sitting erect, sedate and decorous, with grave, inscrutable countenance, disdaining to look down at common curs on foot, manifestly a dog that appreciated his position in society;—that was Adolphus. Who that saw him thus, and remembered poor Will Rayburn,—compared this stylish stranger with that village youth as he was last seen limping about,—would not have voted, with the Waybrook majority, that Marian Fenway had chosen wisely and well?

The mouse-colored horse was frequently to be seen standing at Mr. Fenway's gate, hitched by a weight (he pulled if tied to a post), and scrupulously blanketed after exercise, when there was the least chill in the air (if so careful of his horse, how tender would the man be of his wife!); and often the dignified dog got down then and there to make room for a fairer companion.

To have heard her musical, light laugh as she stepped in (how gracefully Adolphus assisted her, keeping her skirts from the wheels!), and then to have seen her riding radiant by his side after the fleet grayhound of a horse, would you not have sworn that she was the fairest and happiest maiden

in the land? How they chatted and laughed! What an atmosphere of romance and enjoyment surrounded them as they passed swiftly along, amid the lights and shadows of the village, just before sunset on a mild May evening! What an edifying sight it would have been to Will Rayburn, had he been there to see!

Farnell's Folly was being rapidly transformed into Daskill's Wisdom, and Adolphus took Marian (the engagement was public now) almost every day to see the work going forward in the house and about the grounds. He consulted her taste in everything, and seemed solicitous that her slightest wish should be gratified. The manner in which he would sometimes, at a mere suggestion from her, issue orders to the workmen at once, and on the spot, as if she were a queen whose lightest preference was law,—what could be more flattering? Although she frequently observed afterwards that such orders had not been strictly carried out.

"Why, Adolphus!" she cries (oh if Will Rayburn could hear that heavenly voice calling the delightful name in those grand, echoing rooms!), "the men didn't do as you told them, after all!"

Then Adolphus blames the workmen for their neglect, unless they happen to be within hearing; in which case he coolly takes the responsibility upon himself.

"On reflection, Marian, I felt sure you would prefer it this way, after it was done; if you don't, it shall be done over to suit you."

To which she is sure to reply, "Of course you know best, Adolphus."

But it is sometimes almost provoking; for instance, when, because he had insisted on it as a matter of great importance, she spent hours in selecting from a large number of samples such styles of paper hangings as she thought best suited the various rooms, and then found on her next visit that other

styles had actually been put on, Aldophus saw that she felt aggrieved, and made haste to proffer the usual explanation.

"I felt sure, on reflection, that these styles would please you much the best, — they are so much more *distingués*. If they don't we can put the others right on over them." The devoted, generous man!

He brought her up to the place one day expressly to ask her what trees she would have planted on a certain terrace; and she had decided in favor of the Scotch larch and the mountain ash, even selecting the trees.

"Make no mistake, now," was Mr. Daskill's last charge to the foreman. "It shall be called Marian's Terrace," he said to her; "and your trees shall keep this happy day in sacred remembrance."

What, then, was her astonishment afterwards to find Austrian pines in their place! She began to scold the gardener, who said, "Austrian pines was Mr. Daskill's last orders, mum."

"True," said Adolphus, "for, on reflection, I knew you would much prefer the pines, the terrace being so conspicuous in winter, when larches look so hairy and ugly."

"But my dear little mountain ashes!" said Marian. "Their berries are so beautiful, and they attract so many birds."

"Oh, but you would n't have liked them at all, stuck up there among the pines," said Adolphus.

"Of course, you are quite right," said Marian, but with a sinking heart; "your taste is so much better than mine."

"It is more practised than yours, that's all. You have naturally the finest taste of any woman I ever knew," said Adolphus, who could afford to be generous with his praise, since he always went on and did things in his own way. "But, if you say so, you shall have the larches and mountain ashes in place of the pines; it will be only a few hours' work for a gang of men."

"Oh, no, indeed!" said Marian.

Mrs. Fenway had not yet visited her daughter's future home, although she longed to do so, and was inclined to be exasperated at somebody, because her maternal pride, pointing that way, had suffered neglect. But Mr. Daskill, who was probably the most delightful man you ever saw in the matter of making fine promises, had insisted that she must not think of walking on so great an occasion as her visit would be, and had engaged to take her up in his carriage.

"I am not quite ready for you yet; but in a few days I shall wish to consult you and Marian together regarding some very important particulars. Your first visit will be a great event; and you must not go without me on any consideration."

Which was placing Mrs. Fenway in a very trying situation. If Mr. Daskill was unwilling she should go without him, and was never ready to take her, what could the unhappy lady do? It was so embarrassing to be asked by neighbors if she had seen the house, and be obliged to answer (as she sometimes did rather shortly), "No!"

Had she been put off so by anybody but Adolphus, that hot little temper of hers would have been heard from, be sure. But it was too early yet to risk any small indulgence of the kind with her future son-in-law.

Marian had left Miss Maybloom's seminary at the close of the winter term; and she, who was altogether too young to marry when poor Will Rayburn wanted her, was now making preparations for a speedy union with Mr. Daskill.

The wedding was to be a grand affair for Waybrook. Mr. Fenway did not look with a very auspicious eye upon the match, yet he opened his purse freely at his wife's demands. Then what gifts Adolphus lavished on his future bride! It rained jewels at one time; sparkling showers fell into her lap. There was nothing in his Waybrook store, nor even in Buffalo, quite fine enough for her, but rich goods had to come from New York expressly for her outfit. Adolphus was par-

ticular to have her select, from samples previously sent for, such as she liked best ; but when the goods came, they were found to be nearly all patterns of his own choice.

"On reflection," he said, "I felt certain that you would prefer these, they are so much more the style ; and making up my orders in a hurry at last, I didn't have time to consult you."

"You are right, I've no doubt," said Marian. "But I was foolish enough to set my heart on that lovely lavender."

"Dear, you shall have the lovely lavender, or any other silk in the world !" said the noble Adolphus.

"Oh, no, don't send for it now ; I don't care for it, really."

But Adolphus was sure she did, and declared that she should have it, to please him now, if not to please herself. Was there ever free-hearted lover like him ? But there was this little circumstance connected with the lavender silk, — that he appeared from the moment to have forgotten all about it : it was never ordered, and it never came.

Wedding presents from all quarters poured in. The elegant practice of contributing to a bride's trousseau had not hitherto been much in vogue among the good people of Waybrook ; but the friends of Adolphus set a splendid example, which established the fashion for all coming time. From persons she had never seen came pictures, statuettes, fans, screens, epergnes, vases, and oh, such quantities of sideboard and table silver ! It would not do for her own associates to be outdone in generosity by strangers ; they came, saw, and were conquered by the brilliant display ; going away sick at heart until they too had done something creditable to themselves in the same line of business.

So it got to be quite the rage to give something to Marian Fenway. Nobody liked to hear the catalogue of her presents, and be obliged to confess having given nothing. Her jilted lovers all came down handsomely, except one we know, whose ears were fortunately beyond the din of all these doings.

Even the poor, who could ill afford it, paid tribute, not so much to friendship and the bride as to the great goddess, the Diana of the Ephesians, Fashion. Her late teachers and schoolmates all gave, with few exceptions, the most noticeable of whom was Julia.

"I have nothing to give," she said to Marian herself; "and I shall not go to your wedding."

Nine butter-knives were presented, all marked.

Mrs. Wetherspun opened her heart and her work-bag, and gave a pair of woollen stockings (and bragged what nice, warm ones they were, and what small thanks she got for them ever afterward); and black Nance contributed a tooth-brush.

"I tell ye what, Lottie," said Geordie Lorkins, wrinkling his features humorously, as he came home one day from his father-in-law's, where he had seen the array of gifts, "hanged if I hain't learnt a lesson; and if you and I was to be married over again, take my head for a turnip if I would n't do the thing differently. And if ever you, Mrs. Chilgrove, think of uniting yourself with a man in the holy bonds of matter-o'-money, let me tell you how to come the wedding-present game. Manage to set the fashion of giving you things in the first place, and you're all right. Start it yourself, if nobody else will. Send to your own address some anonymous, elegant trifle, — silver cake-basket, gold-lined pitcher and goblets, chiny tea-set, or something of the sort, — then talk about 'em, and wonder who it could be, until somebody takes the hint and follows suit. You've got 'em then, for sure! One present brings another like rocks rattling down a bank. Soon as you've something to show and to blow about, — 'Oh, don't you think Mr. Longpurse sent me this? and dear Mrs. Fatpurse sent me that! and my husband's intimate friend, Senator Noodle's son, gave t' other!' — why, the thing is settled. Your delighted relations and acquaintances can't stand the pressure, any more than Deacon Dorset can, old

miser as he is, when he sees his neighbors' names down for ten dollars apiece on a fashionable subscription paper. Only look out for one thing: nobody must suspect that you really need any help in the way of presents. Do you think, if Marian Fenway was a poor girl, going to marry a poor man, — Will Rayburn, for instance, — it would rain teapots and sugar-bowls the way it does? Mabby!"

"I never had any presents when I was married," said Lottie pathetically. "Don't think I envy Marian a bit, for I don't. But it does seem hard, when I stood absolutely in need of so many things I could n't get, for father was embarrassed in his business, and Geordie was paying off the debt he had contracted for his brother; and now to see the extravagant, nonsensical presents lavished on her! I own my heart comes up in my throat when I think what a time I had, and then look at what she is getting! Mother asked what we were going to give: for she's as proud and avaricious for Marian as she can be, and drums up them that don't give something, not asking 'em out and out, as she did me, but throwing out pretty strong hints, and showing the cards attached to the presents, with the givers' names on 'em, and making you feel that 't will be a disgrace to you if there's no occasion for a card with your name. But I can't, for the life of me, think of anything within our means that would be considered any present at all, after what Marian has got."

"I should think you were giving enough, in the sewing you are doing for her," said Mrs. Chilgrove.

"Bless you! she don't think anything of that. What did she send me this morning, Geordie, but three pairs of ruffled pillow-cases to make up for her! You know, I never could afford to make a pair for myself, with all my other work; but I can make them for her! Will you believe it, Mrs. Chilgrove, she never did a stitch of sewing for me or the baby, when I've thought she might just as well as not, sometimes.

But what touches me most is that she don't do even for herself. She is cutting around with her dear Adolphus, or arranging some flowers he has sent her, or attending to some silly little ornamental trash or other, which would be all well enough, if she had leisure for it, and didn't have to lay everybody else under contribution to get things done which she ought to give a little time to herself."

"That's the way of the world," said Mrs. Chilgrove. "Some are born to do everything for others, and some are born to have everything done for them."

"It's about so," said Lottie, looking very thoughtful, over the pillow-cases. "I don't mean to be envious. I don't regret at all that Geordie and I were married as quietly as we were,—just a few friends present, no parade at all,—for I should prefer to do just so again. But when I see this fuss made over her wedding, as if she were a princess, and I a nobody, I can't help feeling it, there."

And Lottie, having spoken, felt better.

A few days before the wedding was to take place, Mrs. Fenway came in, flushed and worried, to make Lottie a new proposition.

"Things are huddling up dreadfully at the close!" said she. "Dear Marian's dresses ain't anywhere near done yet. Some things she'll actually need for the occasion, or on the wedding tour, can't possibly be got ready without we all take hold and help."

"I have n't done much else but take hold and help, for the past month," replied Lottie.

"I know; and now you've got those ruffled pillow-slips. But you can put all but one pair off, and do them after the wedding, and before they get back from their journey."

"I think people who intend to make a great wedding should take plenty of time for it, and not put everybody in a panic to help them through at last."

"Lottie!" Mrs. Fenway began, but remembered that she had come to ask a favor. "I don't wonder you think so. The time *is* too short. But Mr. Draskill *would* set an early day. He isn't a man to be put off,—he's so fond of dear Marian! Come, now, Lottie, you haven't much to do, with your small family,—why can't you and your friend, Mrs. Chilgrove, come and do some sewing for us at the house? For there are *some* kinds of sewing we can't very well let go *out* of the house, you know."

"Bless you, I've got to get *myself* ready for the wedding yet; and I don't know what under the sun I'm going to wear."

"Oh, you can think of that afterwards. Come, both of you, and bring the baby, and have Geordie come up to tea. What do *you* say, Mrs. Chilgrove?"

The quiet lady had not yet touched needle to anything of Marian's, but had worked for Lottie while Lottie worked for her sister. She did not immediately reply, but stitched on in silence, with her face bent quite low, so that the faint greenish cast that came over it, and the bitter smile that writhed across it, were hardly perceived. Then she answered, without looking up,—

"It shall be as Lottie says."

So it happened that they went up the next day to the assistance of Marian's dress-makers.

CHAPTER XXII.

DRESS-MAKING.

It was Mrs. Chilgrove's first appearance in Waybrook society. Lottie and Geordie had discreetly kept to themselves what little they knew of her history; but, thanks to Bob Styles and the Wintergreen sisters, she was already well if not very favorably known to the good people of the village.

"I do declare," said Mrs. Wetherspun, who had come in to see if her pair of stockings were placed on exhibition with Marian's other presents, "if you hain't got that 'Mis' Shilgrove to sewin' for ye! Ain't ye 'fraid?"

"Afraid of what?" said Mrs. Fenway.

"Why! jest think of the awful stories Bob Styles told about her! Miss Abby says she wonders Lottie will have her in the house. Who under the canopy is she, anyway?"

"You must ask her. And for the present, I must beg you to excuse me, Mrs. Wetherspun, I've so much to do."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Wetherspun with her most formidable scowl. "I suppose! sartin! But you hain't told me yit what Marian said to the stockin's. I hope she noticed they're re'l warm ones; and they're about the longest pair I ever knit. I don't see as she's put 'em among her perty presents yit."

"She'll have them attended to in time. And, I'm sure, she's ever so much obliged to you."

"Oh, not at all!" said Mrs. Wetherspun, glad to hear it. "One minute, Mis' Fenway!" she added, thinking it hardly fair that she should be hurried out of the parlor where the presents and the company were, and dropped in the sit-

ting-room in this abrupt way. "If you've no objection, I should like to step back an' see the dress-makin' goin' on, it's sich a dreffle perty sight. I never did see sich sweet perty gownds in all my born days. As I say to my husband a'most every night of my life, 'Only to think,' I says, 'of one of the Fenway gals makin' out so well!' 'Sides, I want to git another squint at that 'ere Mis' Shilgrove." Mrs. Fenway said pettishly that she did n't know of any reason why she should n't, "treatin' me right down rude, now," Mrs. Wetherspun afterwards complained to her husband; "for she's terrible stuck up, Mis' Fenway is, ever sence that Daskill has been payin' tention to Marian. I must say, I thought it right down mean, 'specially arter the stockin's I've knit for the gal. Ketch me a knittin' of her any more, if she goes barefoot!"

She smothered her resentment at the time, however, and returned to the parlor, and sat down with her things on, because nobody asked her to take them off, and scowled on Lottie, and looked sour at the "sweet perty gownds," and had a long squint, and a strong squint, and (I regret to add) a particularly disagreeable squint, at "that 'ere Mis' Shilgrove," who never once rewarded her curiosity by lifting her eyes from her work. At length, as her presence seemed to cast a shadow on the sociability, she took her leave, a minute too soon, as she found.

"There!" thought she, "if I'd stayed a leetle longer, I sh'd 'a' seen Mr. Daskill! There he comes, with Geordie Lorkins, both invited to supper, I warrant! I should think, arter that pair o' stockin's, I'd oughter been asked to stay. But we're sich grand folks now, since we've got a rich merchant a courtin' our darter! I've as good a mind to make an arrant to go back as ever I had to eat!"

Geordie had just fallen in with Adolphus on the street, and, as both chanced to be going to the same place, they went together. Mr. Daskill, however, came uninvited.

"The idea of asking him to tea with such a perfect drove of dress-makers!" Mrs. Fenway had said; and it would hardly have been considered a fair thing, in Waybrook society, to set those useful and respectable ladies down at a second table. Great, therefore, was the good housewife's dismay on seeing Adolphus — now a familiar visitor at the house — walk in with Lottie's husband.

Geordie led the way to the parlor, saying, "I always go where the most women-folks are, don't you?" And the fastidious Adolphus found himself in the midst of the drove of dress-makers before he knew it. Even if he had come to take tea, which indeed had not been his intention, the sight would most likely have caused him to change his mind; and he was politely retreating into the entry, saying he had only called to speak with Miss Fenway a moment, when Geordie, after the ridiculous fashion of some people, who think they must introduce everybody on all occasions, began, —

"Miss Clewsey, Mr. Daskill; Mrs. Thackers; and this is my wife." Adolphus remarked with suavity that he had had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Lorkins.

"Mrs. Chilgrove," — Mrs. Chilgrove had not yet looked up, — "let me make you acquainted with Mr. Daskill." She looked up then, bowing civilly but coolly, and went on with her work. "And this," said Geordie, as Marian came into the room, "is my wife's sister. Marian, my friend, Mr. Daskill. I'm responsible if he steals anything, as folks used to say when they introduced their friends in Californy."

Adolphus appeared to take this pleasantry of his future brother-in-law very ill. He had advanced into the room, and made a step toward Mrs. Chilgrove; and now he turned to greet the blushing Marian. Black Nance, who at the same time peeped in to count heads for the table, told the writer of this history, long after, that he looked for a moment much as he did when she gave him the mysterious ring. The cloud

passed from his brow almost immediately, however, in the sunshine of Marian's loveliness ; although the latter noticed that he was not appearing well.

"You will stay to tea, won't you?" the dear girl fondly inquired.

"It was not my intention," said Adolphus hesitatingly, he who so rarely hesitated in any emergency.

"Are you ill?" she whispered.

"Nothing serious—a slight headache. A cup of your mother's tea will cure it. I believe I'll stay."

"Here, Nance! come here!" cried Geordie. "That's the chick I told you about, Mrs. Chilgrove."

"I have seen her—more than once," said Mrs. Chilgrove, in her low, equable voice, just lifting her eyes.

"Have you noticed her, Mr. Daskill?"

"I believe you introduced me," said Adolphus, again politely inclining his head toward Mrs. Chilgrove,—an extraordinary instance of blundering absent-mindedness on his part.

"Not her. I meant Nance," laughed Geordie. "Come in here, Nance, and make some fun for us."

"Can't! Mrs. Fenway 'll be after me!" And Nance ran giggling away.

"She'll tickle ye just about to death, if you can git her to cut up once the funniest she knows how," said Geordie. "Believe me or not, Mr. Daskill, I'll tell ye what she used to do for me. I had a hoss that was the confoundest contrary critter you ever did see about taking in the bits. I always had a row with him when I went to put on his bridle. He'd shet his teeth as if he had the lockjaw, and 't would sometimes take me an hour, or considerably less, to pry 'em apart; he'd back, and rare, and fling, and I'd hang on, and screw my thumb into his gums, and saw with the bits, till by 'n' by he'd get tuckered out, and give up. But I was generally

tuckered out myself by that time. So I tried a new trick. Got Nance to help. You can't guess how."

"No, your conundrum is too heavy for me," said Adolphus, pleasantly.

"She was a little tud then. And comical? You bet! I would just put her in position on the grass; then I'd lead the critter out." 'Now cut up! make faces! throw yourself, Nance!' I'd say; and she'd begin. I always had to look away, for if I did n't, I laughed myself into knots and kinks, so I could n't do anything. You see, 't was the effect on the hoss I was waiting for. First, he'd regard her in mild astonishment; then with a genial kind of smile; then with a tremendous grin; finally, he'd throw out his head, and bust into a reg'lar hoss-laugh, mouth wide open, and in would go the bits 'fore he could say 'Jack Robinson!'"

"Geordie, who do you think is going to believe that nonsense?" said Lottie.

"I've nothing to say for the rest of you. And as for me," Geordie replied, "I ain't exactly like old Uncle Tibbetts, who used to tell his story about the witches whetting his scythe till he finally got to believe it himself. He said he went out to mow the next morning, 'and sure's I'm a livin' human bein' accountable to my Maker,' says he, 'that 'ere scythe 'u'd jest slide through the grass as it would through air, an' the grass 'u'd jest close right up agin arter it, an' stand edzac'y as if 't had n't been cut at all. I like a toler'ble sharp scythe to mow with,' says the old man; 'but I'm blest,' says he, 'if I want the witches to whet for me agin!'"

Mr. Daskill was getting used to Geordie's jokes. He now laughed more heartily at them than Marian had ever seen him laugh before. He also told some agreeable stories (in spite of his headache), and made himself delightfully at home. He discussed with the dress-makers the merits of the materials they were at work upon, and treated everybody with such

affability that Miss Clewsey and Mrs. Thackers (as Marian could see) were charmed with him. It was not easy to discover how Mrs. Chilgrove regarded him, she was such a very quiet person. He seemed resolved to make himself agreeable to her, however, and drew his chair near hers.

"This is a fine piece of goods, Mrs. —"

He had forgotten the name, and she had to prompt him.

"Chilgrove," she said, politely ceasing to sew while he examined the fabric.

"You seldom see a lovelier gloss," observed Adolphus.

"The surface is beautiful, but one cannot always judge by the surface," replied Mrs. Chilgrove.

"True. But the surface is a most important part, in a matter of this kind." He held the silk up to the light, and said, quite near the lady's ear, "If it can be preserved as it is for only a short time, I shall be satisfied, I shall not mind the cost."

The announcement of tea created some confusion. Still Adolphus appeared interested in the silk with the lovely gloss. "I am anxious that this should be a perfect success," he said. "Money is no consideration."

Mrs. Chilgrove smiled, with her peculiarly intense, quiet look, and answered, —

"The least exposure will ruin it. Oh, yes," she added, seeing Marian approach, "I think it becomes her. It is just the shade to suit her complexion."

"I am so glad you like it," said Marian, beautiful and happy.

Mrs. Chilgrove cast a fold of the silk over the fair form.

"Allow me to say, Mr. Daskill, I admire your taste, both in silks and shoulders."

"I thank you with all my heart!" said Adolphus, with rather effusive friendliness, considering the occasion. And, offering Mrs. Lorkins his arm, he led her out to tea.

CHAPTER XXII.

MRS. FENWAY VISITS BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE.

IT would be edifying, if we had leisure, to sit down with the pleasant company at Mrs. Fenway's table. To see Mr. Fenway so hospitable and good-humored, Geordie full of his jokes, the boys bright-faced and well-behaved, Adolphus in excellent spirits, Marian blushing and beautiful, Mrs. Chilgrove reserved yet serene, and the rest cheerful if not merry, who would have supposed there could be anything but sincerity and happiness and good-will in that small circle?

Even Mrs. Fenway, mortified as she had been at Mr. Daskill's inopportune arrival, and seriously inclined as she was to be vexed with him for having so long prevented her from seeing Marian's future home, forgot her resentment, and turned out the silver lining of her cloudy disposition on the festive occasion.

She had firmly resolved not to mention the proposed visit again to Adolphus; but he appeared so very gracious that night, and she was really in such a fidget to inspect the premises (as she afterwards owned), that she ventured once more to advance the now stereotyped inquiry, as he was about taking leave, "When, Mr. Daskill, are you going to carry me up to see the new house, as you promised?"

"I am ready now at any time, and have been for a week," answered the bland Adolphus.

As it was a week since she had ceased to agitate the subject, during which time she had been waiting silently, but not without much pent-up feeling, for him to propose it, this

cool announcement proved rather irritating to the vivacious lady. "Why on earth, then, did n't you tell me?" she said, with a spark — only a spark — of impatience in her sprightly eyes.

"I saw you were very much occupied," replied Adolphus, "and supposed, when you were at leisure, you would remind me."

"I had already reminded you till I was tired of reminding, and thought you might be tired of being reminded," said Mrs. Fenway, "But if you now say you are ready, I'll remind you once more, and I hope for the last time."

She had a tart way of expressing herself, even when she meant to be perfectly respectful and conciliating.

"Name the hour!" said Adolphus; and she promptly named nine o'clock the next morning. "Let me see!" then says the man of business. "I may go to Buffalo to-morrow. I rather think I shall. Suppose, then, we say the first morning after my return."

Mrs. Fenway was so nettled at this unexpected and truly Daskilian turn, that she could not trust herself to say a word, but gulped back something that rose in her throat, and smiled him a sardonic good-night.

Geordie's party happened to be going at the same time; and, as Geordie carried the baby, Adolphus offered his escort to the ladies. Lottie thanked him, but said she would walk with her husband. Mrs. Chilgrove, however, accepted the arm so civilly proffered, Marian holding a light for them at the door.

"How kind and polite he is to everybody!" thought the dear girl, who was always anxiously on the watch for opportunities to praise him to herself, and nurse her feeble heart.

But Mrs. Fenway's looks and gestures, as she vigorously set back the parlor chairs, making more noise than was, perhaps, actually necessary, betrayed a less happy frame of mind.

Her husband broke into a laugh. "I should like to see anybody else but your fine Mr. Daskill snub you in that way," said he. "I rather think you'd do something besides slamming chairs back after he was gone."

"I don't care! it's real aggravating, no matter who 't is! Though, of course, he didn't mean it," she added, seeing a shadow on Marian's face.

From that moment she kept her own counsel on the subject; but she did not cease to chafe inwardly, saying to herself, "I shall never see the house at this rate. He'll have some plaguy excuse or another for putting me off when he comes back. I've a good mind to go alone! There's one thing, I sha'n't always be so dreadfully afraid of offending his majesty!" and that was some comfort.

She pondered the matter a good deal that night and the next day. Why not make a quiet visit to the house during his absence? "What has he got shut up there he don't want me to see? I must n't go without him, and he's never ready to go with me. The idea! Marian has a key: I can take that. I won't let her know, so that Mr. Bluebeard can't blame her if he finds out. I'll just say nothing, but after tea—the workmen will be gone by that time—I'll make an errand on the street, and see his castle before ever I come home, if I die for it!" She abstracted the key accordingly, and supper done, remarked that she thought she would just slip on her bonnet, and step out and buy a few yards more of that braid. So great was her eagerness that she reached the Folly before the workmen were all gone.

"They'll go and report right to him, if I stop now," she said to herself. "I'll just step up to the seminary and pay for Marian's last quarter, and stop on my way back." This she did. But Miss Maybloom was a great talker, and she could not get away from her until it was almost too late to think of going into the house at all that night. She deter-

mined just to peep in, however, if nothing more; so she took a side path through the newly planted shrubbery to the rear of the house. All was quiet; it was now twilight. She had learned from Marian which door the key fitted: she found it, fitted it, and went in.

"The blinds were all shut" (so the good lady was accustomed to continue the narrative in after years), "and it looked so dark inside, I left the door open a few inches, to let in a little glimmer of the sunset light, which had almost faded out of the sky by this time. First, was a rear entry, next to that was the conservatory, which was as light as the twilight could make it. Then I went into the parlors; but all the light I could get there was through the conservatory doors, for the blinds were all closed, and I couldn't open one of 'em if I was to die; the new-fangled fastenings beat *me!*"

She found blinds of the same baffling character everywhere, as from room to room she went, and pushed, and wrenched, and got angry, to no purpose. Here she was in the grand, great house, and it appeared that she was not to see it after all. It was more of a Bluebeard's castle than she had anticipated. To the feeling of triumph, tempered by trepidation, with which she had first entered, a sort of superstitious fear succeeded. Silence and mystery pervaded the void and gloomy apartments, and it seemed almost as if she might get lost in them. Whence the cold revulsion that came over her, as she recalled the feelings of maternal ambition with which she had been wont to contemplate Marian's proud future as lady of the castle?

She came to the great, dark staircase, and, though her mind misgave her at every step, began the dim ascent, saw a ghost when half-way up, which turned out to be a bust in a niche, and reached the landing above, with creepings and curdlings of flesh.

She determined to make one more effort for a little light,

and raised the upper hall window, to get at the blinds there. She was struggling to open them, when a door shut below with a noise that echoed ominously through the empty apartments. She started back in terror, and listened to hear if anybody was coming. But the house was quiet as a tomb. Then she groped her way down-stairs, afraid of meeting somebody, or somebody's ghost, at every turn.

Suddenly a bell tinkled in a distant part of the house.

"That frightened me almost out of my wits, for I did n't really believe there was a living soul on the premises but myself, and I know now there was n't. I had never heard of a house being haunted before it was finished or inhabited, but the Folly seemed an exception. I'd have given anything to be out of it. I made my way to the rear entry, and looked for the gleam of light from the door I'd left partly open; but it was dark there too, and I found to my horror that 't was that door which had slammed! I rushed to it and tried to open it, but 't was locked. It was on the south side of the house. I had opened a window on the north side, and I remembered that the wind came in fresh and strong, while I was at work at the blinds; circulating through, it had blown the door to, I suppose. But how about the ringing of the bell? It was not until long after, when I had leisure to look over the house by daylight, that I found out an explanation of that mystery. Probably, in groping my way along by the wall, I had somehow moved one of those little cranks which they have nowadays instead of the old-fashioned bell-cords, and I had been the bell-ringing ghost myself!

"It's all clear to me now, and I can laugh at it. But I did n't feel much like laughing then, I can tell you, especially when I found I could n't get that door open again to save me. I had really come in with a latch key; but I did n't know any more about those new-fangled spring latches than the man in the moon. The door had shut, the latch had sprung, and

there I was! I might have studied the thing out by daylight, and in my sober senses; but what could a poor frightened creature do in the dark? I could n't have been more effectually shut up if I had been in a jail. And all the while it was growing darker and darker. 'Mercy me,' thinks I, 'what will the folks say?' As I had n't told where I was going, of course, they would never think of coming to look for me there; but I could fancy them sitting up for me, hour after hour, and wondering what could have become of me; inquiring at the neighbors, and finally rousing the town at midnight, and getting up a grand hunt for me, with lanterns, and torches, and tin horns, and no end of absurdities! Of course, Mr. Daskill would hear of it,—everybody would hear of it; and the name of Farnell's Folly would probably be changed to Mrs. Fenway's Silliness from that night."

It occurred to her that she might break one of the conservatory windows, and walk out; or one of the lower blinds, and crawl out. Before proceeding to such extremities, she resolved to grope her way back to the upper entry window which she had left open, and see if anybody was near.

"Why, yes!" said she, peering through the interstices of the blinds; "there *is* somebody! O dear! shall I call for help, and have 'em go for a workman that's got a key? *Shall* I scream? They'll say, 'Who are you?' I'll say, 'No matter, but come and help!'—for maybe they can open the blinds. They'll ask, 'Where are you?' and I'll have to answer, 'Here, shut up in Farnell's Folly!' Oh, I'd give the world to know who it is!"

She was destined to gain the wished-for knowledge—a part of it at least—without paying so extravagant a price. She heard footsteps on the gravelled walk below, and saw two figures. They had entered at the gate; they were approaching the house. One was a woman whom she could not recognize in the deep gloom that now overshadowed everything.

The other was a gentleman, whose port was unmistakable, even in that obscurity.

Mrs. Fenway did not call for help to the man most capable of rendering it. She was too much astonished to do anything but lean gasping by the window, and gaze down through the blinds. She had thought her Bluebeard in a distant city, and here he was at the door.

But perhaps he would not come into the house. It is hard to say whether she hoped he would or hoped he wouldn't. She dreaded discovery. Yet she prayed for the unlocking of a door, and she was now possessed with a burning curiosity to know who the woman was.

"Surely, it *can't* be Marian! Who then *can* it be, here alone with him at this time of night!"

They passed from sight under the porch. Then Mrs. Fenway heard the creaking of a key (not a latch-key) as it turned in the lock. The door was opened and closed again, and there were footsteps in the hall below.

"We shall be quiet in here, and we can talk without being overheard," said the voice of Adolphus. "This way!—can you see? We shall find some lights in the conservatory."

As they passed on through the dark entry, Mrs. Fenway's fears prompted her to steal down the stairs, and make good her escape from the front door. At every downward step, however, that impulse grew weaker and her curiosity grew stronger, until she was ready to brave new trials in order to fathom the mystery.

She crept across the hall as noiselessly as she could, although her shoes would creak and her dress would rustle, and she feared that even her breathing and the beating of her heart might be overheard; and got as far as the second door leading to the parlor. Through this Adolphus and his companion had passed. She could hear their voices farther on,

but was afraid to advance, for before her now were the windows of the conservatory, seen through an open doorway; and cut in full-length silhouette against that glimmering background, haughtily erect, was the startling likeness of her future son-in-law.

There Mrs. Fenway paused and leaned, with her feet in the hall, her head in the parlor, and her panting bosom pressed against the dividing door-frame, where she looked and listened with all her might. The lady was not visible, and her voice, covered by the partition, was scarcely audible where Mrs. Fenway stood. But Mr. Daskill's low, but earnest and distinct tones reached her ears. He was saying imperiously, —

"It can't be prevented. Make all the revelations you like. I can forestall them."

Then came some rapid syllables from the lady, which poor Mrs. Fenway held her breath, and would willingly have stopped her heart, in order to overhear. She caught only two or three angry words, — "monstrous perfidy," — "revenge." Then Adolphus resumed, —

"No doubt you can make it out bad enough, if you tell your story. But it won't be much of a revenge. I can deny everything and who will believe you? You can bring your witnesses, but who are they?"

Again the woman said something behind the dividing wall; and Adolphus replied, —

"I don't care for all that. I shall denounce it as a conspiracy, a plot to black-mail me. You can't win at that game. I have some character and standing in society: what have you? It is for the interest of certain persons to believe in me, and they will continue to believe in me, in spite of you."

The lady was speaking again; when Adolphus — still in black profile against the glass, his hat on, his head high — reached out his hand, and snapped his fingers.

"*That* for the old lady! You never can induce *her* to break off the match. She's a silly fool in some things; but she's shrewd enough to see where the family interest lies. I can twist *her* around my finger."

A wonderful sense of burning and faintness came over poor Mrs. Fenway, who seemed to be listening in some frightful dream. The lady was speaking again; then once more Adolphus, —

"There is no reason why we should n't be friends. Let the past go. It can't be remedied now. I can explain a good many things. There's a furnished room upstairs, where we can sit down and come to some sort of understanding. We can help each other, and that will be better than trying to ruin each other."

He led the way; and Mrs. Fenway had barely time to draw back into the hall when they went by her, the unknown woman's dress brushing her as she passed. Almost wild in her eagerness to hear more, she started to follow them, and had reached the foot of the stairs, when a light from above suddenly flashed down upon her; and looking up she saw Mr. Daskill standing in a faint, bluish glare, with a lighted match in his fingers, while his companion passed on around the curve of the staircase.

Had Mr. Daskill at the same time looked down, he might possibly have been edified by the sight of his future mother-in-law crouching back like some wild creature under the shadow of the banisters. When she ventured forth again, the match was extinguished, hall and staircase were dark, and she could hear the footsteps of Adolphus and his companion dying away in the chambers. To follow them seemed a dangerous and hopeless undertaking; and after waiting and listening long, she softly opened the front door, and stole forth, like a thief, from the house.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MRS. FENWAY'S QUANDARY.

MRS. FENWAY was, as we know, human, and had had, in the course of her checkered life, some trying experiences. She had suffered from fear, from wounded pride, from unappeased curiosity, and from ebullient irascibility (like the most of us), on divers occasions; but never before had she been mystified, mortified, terrified, and infuriated, all at once. It is a wonder that she did not betray her presence to Adolphus, and confront him and the unknown lady on the spot. That she did not, shows how easy it may sometimes be for a person of the most violent temper to control it when the necessity appears.

She reached the street in a state of mind bordering on insanity, casting back furious, furtive glances at the house, afraid to be seen lurking near, yet animated by a wild determination to walk up and down the hill until the pair should come forth.

"I'll see who she is, if I die. Silly fool, am I? Can wind me round his little finger, can he? We'll see! I declare, if he has n't got a light in his comfortable furnished room! Shrewd enough to know that our family interest depends on my child's marriage with him, am I? He must n't *silly fool* me much more, then!"

Indulging in reflections of this nature, Mrs. Fenway walked several times up and down, and would have continued that refreshing exercise, had she not noticed a brisk little man coming over the hill. His solid boot-soles made a heavy thud on the road, and, as he trudged along, he muttered to himself some brief but cheery remarks.

"It's old Wetherspun, true as I'm alive! He's been to

visit his daughter, and he's rehearsing the story he's going to tell his wife. It won't do for me to be seen walking up the hill at this time of night." So Mrs. Fenway turned and walked down.

Nearer and nearer tramped the cowhide boots; and more distinct became the wearer's soliloquy.

"As nice a fatted ca'f as ever ye see. Do' no'; porridge, I guess; fed him porridge when I was there. Schoolmaster got the joke on to Amos; told him if he sucked his thumb 't would come off; knew one little boy,—thumb come off; then sucked t' other; that come off, too; then pitched into his fingers; come off, one arter t' other. Hi! hi! Schoolmaster great on a joke. Amos did n't suck his thumb agin all that arternoon; could see him, on the sly, lookin' to see if there was any signs of its crackin'. Schoolmaster an' minister, an' three ladies. Riz biscuit, dried beef, an' grape jelly. Fresh meat both days for dinner; take of a butcher. Put him in trustee of the deestric' school; said he would n't—"

Here Mr. Wetherspun became aware of a female figure a few yards before him; and began to hum snatches of a tune, to turn off his soliloquy. Having come up with his fair neighbor, he slackened pace, peered under her bonnet, and said, "Good evenin'," at a venture.

"Good evening," she replied, in a disguised voice. ("I hoped to goodness he would n't know me for those Wetherspuns were always bound to get in the way, and stick by when they were n't wanted," was her comment on the event in after years.)

"Mis' Fenway, ain't it? Thought I could n't be mistaken, for you're about the shortest and chunkedest woman anywheres about." (If Mrs. Fenway had any personal peculiarities on which she did not pride herself, they were those which had enabled him to know her in the dark; and she felt complimented accordingly.) "Don't ye know *me*?"

"Oh! Mr. Wetherspun, is it?"

"'T was when I left hum, and I guess I hain't changed my name nor my natur' in two days. My son-in-law, he brought me as fur 's the Corners. Both seem to be goin' the same way, — s'pose ye won't object to my comp'ny."

"I don't know and reason why I should," snapped Mrs. Fenway, in a voice which might have betrayed that there was a very particular reason, "unless you want to walk faster than I do." And she fell into a snail's pace.

"I ain't in no gre't of a hurry," said Mr. Wetherspun.

"Your wife will be jealous," said Mrs. Fenway.

"Wull, no, I guess not, though she 'll wonder where *you*'d ben, alone, this time o' night, and she 'll like as not pester me if I ain't able to tell her. These women like to know everything, ye know."

"So do these men, sometimes!"

"Wull, I do' no' but you 're about right. I own up to it, I *was* kinder wonderin' where you could a ben goin', an' now footin' on't hum so monstrous slow. I 'm beat if I can guess."

"It ain't much of a riddle, and I don't mind telling you," said Mrs. Fenway. "I 've been to call on Miss Maybloom, and pay her for Marian's last quarter."

Mr. Wetherspun was surprised that he had not thought of that. Then he laughed.

"I s'pose ye 'd 'a' sent her another quarter, if she had n't took her prize a'ready."

Mrs. Fenway asked curtly, "What prize?"

"Oh, I did n't mean no school medal, nor nothin' o' that sort; but the prize young ladies are perty generally aimin' arter, I believe. I know *our* gals thought on't, an' so did their mammy. She was for givin' on 'em a little more of the ornamental branches; but I said, like as not if we did, and got 'em educated up to the highest pitch, till they 'd know lots 'bout

books and dreffle little 'bout housekeepin', it might be their luck arter all to marry poor men, who 'd a sight druther they 'd know how to make good bread than to play the pyaner ever so sweet and perty. There 's Deacon Tibbetts's darter; they laid out a slue of money on her edecation, and she got nobody but a forty-acre farmer, arter all the expense. But you consider it paid perty well in Marian's case, don't ye? She got suthin' more 'n common by the investment, that 's a fact. I 'xpect Daskill 's rich, and a perty slick sort of a feller in other ways."

Mrs. Fenway must have remembered how suddenly Marian's French, and drawing, and even music, had lost their importance in her eyes as soon as Mr. Daskill's bid was in. Yet she answered Wetherspun sharply, —

"I hope other people educate their daughters from some other motive than just to get them husbands, if *you* did n't. And as for *Mr.* Daskill, he 's a gentleman, and he ain't a *slick feller*, and I 'll thank you to bear it in mind."

She hoped with this retort to get rid of him. But though he had thought a moment before that he really must be moving on a little faster, he now feared he had offended her, and stayed to atone for the fault. The more he strove to conciliate her, however, the more impatient and irate she became, the result being that he did not leave her until she had reached her own gate.

A result which likewise proved exasperating to another amiable female, namely, Wetherspun's wife. He had engaged to be home at eight o'clock; and Mrs. Wetherspun, after anticipating the news he would bring, with all the eagerness of a child for promised gifts, experienced all the impatience of a child when the clock struck and he did not come. She waited awhile longer, then put on her bonnet, and stepped out to the gate to look for him. Then she thought she would walk a little way up the street, and meet him. Then, as she

couldn't bear to return without him, after going so far, she went on farther still, certain that he must be near, and never dreaming of the possibility of missing him; for how could she know that he had turned up Brook Street, to beau Mrs. Fenway home?

Meanwhile Mr. Wetherspun took leave of his fair neighbor, and hastening to his own door, found his wife absent and the house deserted. As he was quite as eager to tell his news as she had been to hear it, his turn had now come to wonder and grow impatient, and watch and hearken, exclaiming every minute, "What can have become of that everlastin' gadder, this time o' night? It's enough to vex a saint!"

Mrs. Fenway stood by the gate where he had left her, in a terrible quandary as to what she should do,—whether to go in, or to hasten back,—when somebody came running to her from the bridge.

"Frank, is that you?"

"Yes 'em; and I've been looking for you everywhere. Miss Clewsey wanted the braid; and Marian could n't think what had become of you. Where in Jericho have you been?"

"No matter!" said Mrs. Fenway sharply; but she quickly changed her tone. "Frankie dear, I want you to do something, and never lisp a syllable of it to a living soul! Will you please mother once?"

"Will you let me buy Tom Cragin's dog-harness?" said Frank, ready for a bargain. "It just fits Franco, and I've got some wheels to make a —"

"Yes, yes! Don't speak so loud!" And Mrs. Fenway, on his promise of secrecy, gave him his instructions.

He capered gleefully away; but was sorry, on reflection, since she had consented so readily to the dog-harness, that he had not also stipulated for a wagon.

She entered the house, determined to conceal forever the cause of her trouble; threw off her things and sat down:

but quickly got up again, and went from room to room, and up-stairs and down-stairs, heaving sudden and deep sighs, and taking violent pinches of snuff; answering even Marian's anxious questions fretfully and evasively, all the while, with secret, consuming fire of impatience, awaiting Frank's return. At last his feet came bounding up the steps. She called him immediately into her room, and shut the door.

"I've earnt the dog-harness!" he chuckled.

"'Sh!" said his mother, flushed and trembling. "Who is she? Anybody I know?"

"Anybody you know! Well, I guess!" Frank rubbed his hands and giggled. "Ye see, I peeled it up street tight as I could buckle; only just stopped to tell Tom I'd take his dog-harness, if he'd put on a new crouper, for the old one's so short it makes Franco mad as sixty when you go to —"

Mrs. Fenway gave him a smart shake to bring him back to the subject of inquiry.

"Never mind about the dog-harness. Did you see her?"

"Of course I did! I'm telling as fast as I can. How could I find out who she was, if I did n't see her?"

"Well, well! go on, Frankie dear!"

"Well, well! I am going on, ain't I? I *did* go on — up High Street; and I would n't let Tom go with me, cither, though he offered to; for I told him 't was a secret. I had n't gone far when I heard somebody talking, and saw two people, a man and a woman, coming along down towards me. So I just pitched my cap over my eyes — darned if I was afraid, if 't was dark! — and put on a thundering big swagger, and walked right up and met 'em. I knew Dolph Daskill by his strut, and he was doing about all the talking, — telling how he was going to fix up the house, just as I've heard him twenty times; for, get him a-going on that, don't he spread!"

"But her!" said Mrs. Fenway, smothering with her own eagerness. "I'm dying to know about *her*!"

"Die then ! ain't I telling ?" cried Frank irreverently. "I thought I knew her voice, when she spoke once or twice, but was n't sure ; so I just turned, and tagged along at their heels ; followed 'em all the way down High Street, and then along Main Street, till they came to Cross Street, and turned into that, and stopped — ye can't guess where ! At old Wetherspun's gate ! And Wetherspun came out, with a dripping and flaring candle, and —"

"But who was the woman ?"

"Mrs. Wetherspun, of course, large as life, and twice as natural ! Well, what ?" said Frank, in a sudden change of key, rubbing one cheek, which had received a smart slap, without the least apparent provocation.

"You're lying to me !" said Mrs. Fenway. "That never was Mrs. Wetherspun in this world !"

"Then I hain't got any eyes, have I ? Nor ears either ?" He rubbed one of them. "Did n't hear her and the old man pitch into each other like a thousand of brick, did I ? He had come home, and had n't found her, and that made him cross ; and she had gone to meet him, and missed him, and that made her crosser ; but she met Daskill instead, and walked down with him. That was all I heard ; then they shut the door, and I put for home. And I don't see what I've done to be slapped for, neither ! So, there !"

"Well, well ! Go to bed ! The idea !"

"May I have the dog-harness ?"

"Yes, yes ! Absurd !"

Thereupon Frank was satisfied, and wondered why his mother was not satisfied too.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MISSING LATCH-KEY.

MR. ADOLPHUS DASKILL made his appearance at the house, the next morning, in such excellent spirits that Mrs. Fenway was half inclined to believe her vision of him the evening before to have been the illusion of a dream. There was nothing of the mysterious, dark villain about him, but all was open and cheerful as the day. She could not, however, meet him without visible agitation.

"I thought you had gone to Buffalo!" she said very shortly, remembering, among other things, that she was a silly fool.

"I was detained by important business. I don't go until to-morrow," he answered, with charming suavity.

He could see that something was wrong with her, and made a quick guess — in the right direction, but considerably short of the mark — that her much-talked-of visit to the Folly might be the cause. He did not care to risk any further resentment on her part just then; so he added, in his blandest tones, —

"My horse is at the gate; and I have called to see if you and Marian will afford me the pleasure, which I have looked forward to so long, of taking you up to the new house. It's a delightful morning."

Mrs. Fenway was prompted to answer in her severest manner, "No, sir, thank you! I don't care to go! — Wind me round his little finger, can he? We'll see!" But she curbed her unruly member, and immediately suffered herself to be so wound.

Her anger, though quick and vehement, was short-lived, as we know, and Adolphus was the most persuasive of men. At every smile and pleasant word of his, her suspicions were allayed, her resentment cooled. She was, at all events, determined not to break with him until she knew more. The invitation was accordingly accepted, and the ladies went to dress for the ride.

"Mother," said Marian anxiously, "I wonder what has become of my key! It was in my *porte-monnaie* yesterday, I'm sure. My key to the new house, I mean."

Poor, guilty, scared Mrs. Fenway didn't know what to answer. It was probably still in the outer keyhole of the door, which had slammed, and shut her into the Folly. What if Bluebeard should find it there?

"Where was your *porte-monnaie*?" she asked.

"In this drawer," said Marian. "I don't miss anything else. Do you suppose Nance could have taken the key?"

"It would be just like her. That girl is up to all sorts of mischief! But don't say anything about it now. And I would n't mention it to Mr. Daskill. He will think you've been very careless."

"I sha'n't blame him if he does; he is always so exact in such matters himself," said Marian.

She went on searching and wondering; and her mother, flurried and flushed, ventured feeble conjectures,—inwardly burning with impatience, meanwhile, to fly to that rear door, and secure the key before, by any chance, it could be discovered by Marian or Mr. Daskill.

That Adolphus had not called with the intention of taking out both ladies appeared from the fact that he had come in his one-seated buggy. But the vehicle, which could by no possibility carry three when he wished to ride with the daughter alone, could very well accommodate another—

plump as we know that other to have been — when such was his pleasure.

“We shall crowd you, I’m afraid,” said Mrs. Fenway, as she and Marian made room for him on the seat.

“So much the better; we can never be too near our best friends,” said the gallant gentleman, settling himself between them.

The mouse-colored horse started off at a fleet pace, and the wheels hummed merrily along the pleasant village streets. They were soon at the Folly, where Adolphus anchored his horse by the weight, and then assisted the ladies to alight. He escorted them up the steps between the couchant lions, and throwing open the door, said smilingly, —

“Now, dear mother, you have the satisfaction of entering your future — *home-in-law*, shall I call it?”

Marian laughed, but Mrs. Fenway, suffering from a multitude of emotions, did not perceive the wit.

“I believe,” Adolphus added, “you have never been in the house before?”

“I have passed it many times,” Mrs. Fenway found grace to reply; “but I can hardly say I have ever seen the inside of it.” She flattered her conscience that this was in one sense true, and devoutly wished just then that it were true in every sense.

How beautiful everything was that morning! The slopes and terraces were of a fresh, delightful green; the trees and shrubs were in foliage, and some in blossom; birds were singing, and blue heavens and sweet air were over all. Within, such cheer and splendor met her eyes that she could hardly believe that this was her gloomy prison of the night before. Adolphus threw open the blinds with an ease that astonished her, and showed all the spacious apartments, even to the furnished room up-stairs, where he opened a bottle of champagne in honor of the occasion.

Mrs. Fenway was tempted to say, "Here is where Mr. Daskill entertains his lady friends"; and yielded to the temptation.

"That's evident," said he, as he filled the glasses. "This is the first happy occasion; I trust it will not be the last. Mrs. Fenway, I propose your good health Not a dint in his polished armor to show that her stroke had told.

She had tried in vain, when on the first floor, to get as far as the rear entry. Adolphus, who in the most flattening way accompanied her everywhere and explained everything, had prevented her, saying, "I'll take you out that way presently; I want to show you the chambers first." The missing key, therefore, remained the secret cause of a great deal of anxiety and absent-mindedness to the worthy lady, until, the chambers shown and the champagne tasted, Adolphus led them once more to the lower hall.

"You have n't seen the conservatory," he said, and passed in through the back parlor with Marian.

Mrs. Fenway lingered at the door long enough to see his full figure defined against the conservatory glass, and to be startlingly reminded of her vision of him there the night before; then made a dart at the entry. She believed she could open the door by daylight; but she was spared the necessity. It was already open, and the peaceful sunshine lay along the floor. She made a wild and rapid search for the key. It was gone.

She was looking for it on the threshold, when Adolphus came to find her.

"We are waiting for you in the conservatory," he said, showing her the way back with the greatest politeness.

While he was asking advice of the ladies with regard to some plan, a whitewasher from the cellar came and handed him a key, saying, "I found it in the back door this morning, when I came in."

"Why, Marian," said Adolphus, "that must be your key! When were you here last?"

Marian, as she took it, looked at her mother, and saw the guilt in her flushed and frightened face. I am afraid Adolphus saw it too; for he gave his future mother-in-law a peculiarly piercing regard.

"It must be mine," said Marian, after some hesitation. "I don't know when I could have left it here. It was extremely careless in me!"

In a quiet but imperative tone Adolphus repeated, —

"When were you here last?"

"Two days ago, with you," she replied, looking him affrightedly in the face.

"Who else could have come here with your key?"

"I don't know of anybody."

"Are you sure it is your key?" He took it once more and examined it. She was n't sure — poor girl! She knew only too well that it was, and that it had been stolen and left there by her mother. "I think I may as well take possession of it, till you ascertain if yours is missing," he said, and put it into his pocket.

He soon drove the ladies home, and left them at the door.

"O Marian," Mrs. Fenway burst forth, as soon as they were alone together, "I'm going to tell you about that key. I took it last night, and opened that door with it, on my way home from Miss Maybloom's."

"Why did n't you tell him so?" said Marian reproachfully. "It would have saved me so much!"

"It was impossible!" said Mrs. Fenway, excitedly but firmly. "There's a particular reason why I don't want him to know that I was in the house; and you must never tell him. And you must never ask me the reason. I may tell you some time, not now."

"Then why have you told me anything?" cried Marian,

“It would have been better for me to know nothing about the key, for he will be sure to bring the question up again, and now I shall have to tell him a falsehood, to shield you.”

“It is to shield you, my child!” said Mrs. Fenway impetuously, and went off into violent sighs of despondency and remorse.

Then she resolutely closed her lips; and Marian implored in vain to know the source of those mysterious emotions.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WEDDING.

MRS. FENWAY'S feelings regarding Mr. Daskill and her daughter's future remained extremely variable. It seemed to her sometimes as if she must tell Marian everything, and unite with her in calling him to an account ; then she said to herself (generally after a pleasant interview with Adolphus), "Of course, he's a *man* ! Whatever the trouble was, it's all over ; and the less we know about it, the better."

Meanwhile she did not neglect, by various indirect methods, to inquire out what new-comers had been lately at the hotel, or seminary, or anywhere else in town ; and she bribed Frank to keep an occasional watch over Mr. Daskill's movements. But no clew could she gain to the mystery of the unknown woman. And now, as the wedding day approached, other cares crowded upon her.

"It's not every bride," she said, "whose personal appearance will bear a brilliant wedding ; but Marian's will, and she shall have it." The dresses, the getting of the house in order, the entertainment, the etiquette of the occasion, who should be invited, and who not,—these portentous trifles cost her many a feverish day and sleepless night, and black Nance many a box on the ear.

At last the billets took flight, dovelike, types of innocence and joy,—the loving cards tied delicately together, in token of the hearts already joined, or at least of the hands soon to be. How sweetly suggestive are those little missives, married by the daintiest of silken knots ! What visions they bring of a

more sacred tie, of united, spotless lives ! O garlanded arch of wedlock, beneath which noble manhood and pure womanhood meet ! O roseate mists of the future ! O love and trust, mutual confidence, mutual comfort, mutual help ! O passions, ruddy as the dawn, to be chastely cherished, making the glory and sweetness of life ! O beautiful parentage, divinest tie of the divine garden of delight ! angels of patience, peace, and duty !—what is there of holiest and best that is not symbolized by those small white perfumed wings ?

The carrier billets took flight, some speeding far away, and others settling down in favored homes of quiet Waybrook village. Dear me ! and must the prosaic fact be told, that they brought anything but simple joy, as well where they alighted as where they did not alight. Heart-burnings here ; sordid cares and preparations there.

At last dawned the great day which was the innocent cause of so much preparation and vexation. No lovelier June morning ever breathed the subtle essence of beauty and sweetness into the souls of men. But what a day it was to the Fenway household ! Worn out and worried to death by previous labors and perplexities, Mrs. Fenway hardly knew (as she long after confessed to the writer of this chronicle) whether she stood on her head or her heels.

“There was everything to be seen to ; and I was in a terrible fidget, fearing something would go wrong. Of course it would n’t do to put any cares on poor, dear Marian ; she had all she could bear up under, as it was. A hundred times I could n’t help remembering what a quiet little wedding we made for Lottie, and wondering whether it really paid to wear out souls and bodies, making such a to-do. I was provoked at my husband for taking things so easy. He laughed at me because I acted as if my life depended on tying a ribbon or getting a window cleaned, while he did n’t seem to care whether he had even a pair of gloves to wear.

“‘Think of my big hands in white kids!’ says he. ‘Why, I shall be ashamed of myself!’

“But we all attacked him, and when he really saw that he was going to spoil the whole thing by refusing, he concluded, as he said, to do the silliest thing he ever did in his life, and consented to the gloves, to keep peace in the family.

“I had spoken to Mrs. Chilgrove, because I knew she would be such a help. Marian had made her a present of a new dress, which she might have got ready to wear; but she was either too proud, or something; she came to help us get ready, but would n’t stop to see the wedding.

“Though we had done so little for Lottie at the time she was married, she took right hold, and did everything she could for me and Marian. I did n’t appreciate it at the time, but I’ve learnt to since,” added Mrs. Fenway, resorting to a pinch of snuff, which might have been the cause of her starting tears. “She did all anybody could ask of her,—except one thing. We wanted her to have a green silk for the wedding, it would have been so becoming to her complexion,—she had such a fine color in those days. But no, she insisted on wearing just a plain white muslin fastened with a white ribbon it was her own choice, and I must say she looked about as neat and pretty as anybody there, after all.

“Mr. Daskill’s friends were coming, a good many of them; but there was only one I felt much afraid of, and that was his aunt. I had got the impression, from what he had said of her, that she was one of the most stylish ladies in the world; and I believe I scarcely decided any matter of taste or etiquette without questioning in my own mind, What would Mrs. Downey think of it? She came to town in the afternoon with some of his friends, and went straight up to the new house, which had been got ready for them; and I never saw her till she appeared in the evening.

“She was a tall, spare woman, straight as a cob, as Geordie said, — and a little more so, for I do believe she inclined backwards a little. She had the primmest mouth, which always seemed to be saying, ‘I am Mr. Daskill’s aunt; I am the Mrs. Downey you have heard him mention’; and her whole air, as she looked at me, — or rather over me, for she could scarcely bend enough to look down at me, — conveyed the idea that she considered it extremely genteel to be tall and slender, and very vulgar indeed to be short and stout. But that was mostly my imagination; for you know how apt we are to fancy terrible things in a person we’ve been led to stand in awe of. There was not much to her, but her attitude, and her relation to Mr. Daskill. She would stand or sit, with her hands folded, and her mouth prim, and really flatter herself that she was performing a most important part in society, though she never uttered a word. One of those persons who imagine that all that’s expected of them is countenance and deportment, and that when they’ve carried these serenely into society and serenely out again, they have done a highly proper thing. That was Mrs. Downey.

“I can’t help laughing now, to think how anxious I had been to see her, on one account particularly, — to know what the latest style of head-dress was for ladies of our time of life. I was all dressed when she came; I had on a black mory-antique, with a long, flowing skirt, pointed corsage, front and back; flowing sleeves, and point applikay undersleeves, with collar to match, and a set of Etruscan gold Mr. Daskill had given me; hair plain, — but I wore a neat tull cappee, with flowers, satin ribbons, and long, flowing strings down the back.

“Mrs. Downey wore a pale shade of lavender silk, high in the neck, with plain corsage, long sleeves, and an abundance of lace trimming, small point-lace collar fastened with a small diamond pin, and her hair puffed and frizzed.

"Of course I was made to realize at once that pale lavender was just the thing for ladies of our age, and that black mory-antique was n't the thing at all. But what astounded me most was her puffs and frizzes. We had had a good deal of discussion in the house beforehand, as to whether cappees were in the best taste. I had firmly believed that Mrs. Downey would wear one; in fact, the image that always presented itself to my mind, when Adolphus spoke of her, was a pale genteel lady in a cappee. So the cappee was my choice, though my confidence in it had been shaken by Miss Clewsey and Mrs. Chilgrove, who assured me that cappees were out of style. My mind was in such a trembling, anxious state on that subject that you might almost have knocked me down with a feather; and that will account for the overwhelming effect on my nerves of Mrs. Downey's puffs and frizzes. I was altogether bewildered; and I began to think my nice tull cappee the most outlandish thing in creation. I tell you frankly how foolish I was; for things have happened that have made me, I hope, a little wiser since"; and the lady wiped her eyes.

"I was in perfect despair for a little while, regretting that I had n't taken Mrs. Chilgrove's advice, and accepted her offer to puff and frizz my hair herself; for she said she could do it as well as any barber. I had told her at last, rather sharply, that I would n't be puffed, nor frizzed either, not if the President of the United States was to offer to do it, and that had ended the matter. And now the consequence was, that after making such a hurrah-boys over the fashionable wedding I was giving my daughter, I was going to make my appearance at it in such an antiquated thing as a cappee.

'But suddenly it occurred to me that perhaps it was n't too late yet to make the change. It was seven o'clock, or a little past, and the ceremony was to take place at eight. I ran and put the irons into the fire the first thing. Then I ran to Mrs.

Chilgrove, who was helping Marian get ready, and told her I had concluded to take her advice. I felt that it was eating humble pie, after what I had said before; but I didn't mind. I begged and entreated her to puff and frizz me as soon as possible. She took the request mighty coolly, and never hurried herself in the least but finally, just as I was getting out of all manner of patience, she took hold of me. I was fretful, I know; one would naturally be a little so, under the circumstances. But she had always appeared so meek and composed, I thought she would bear almost anything. My husband had judged her differently from any of us. Marian almost thought her a saint; and Geordie and Lottie would n't hear a syllable breathed against her: they had fairly quarrelled with the Wintergreen girls on her account. But my husband had a way, when he saw us over-and-above enthusiastic about anybody or anything, of just tucking in a word edgeways, to ridicule us; and he'd more than once given us to understand that he thought there was something very different in that woman from what we supposed.

"She had got at my hair, and had already put up with a good deal from me, — for I was on nettles, and I should have thought the swiftest hand in the world too slow, — when I said something, in my sharp way, that showed me just how meek and saintly she was. Laws! down went the iron on the floor with a clang; and off steps my lady, drawing herself up to her full height, and sweeping to the door like a play-actress, with such a look as I never saw on a woman's face before or since. It fairly chilled my blood, heated as I naturally was from fret and excitement.

" 'I came here to do you a service,' says she, 'and not to be insulted. I'd have you remember that I am a lady, Mrs. Fenway, if *you* are not!' There was tameness for you!

"Somehow I did n't fire up, as it would have been just like me to do, — perhaps because she took me so aback with her

tragedy airs; perhaps because I was only puffed and frizzed on one side, and there was nobody to puff and frizz t'other side.

“‘You ain't going to leave me so?’ I called out, half frantic at the idea.

“‘I am going to leave you just so,’ says she, perfectly calm again, but resolute as steel.

“‘I entreated her. I looked at myself in the glass. I was an object! one half my head in magnificent puffs and frizzes, and 'tother side plain. I looked like the halves of two women clapped together by mistake. So I humbled myself again. I don't know that I actually got on my knees to her, for I had on my mory-antique but I might as well. I apologized in the most abject way, and implored her to puff and frizz the other half of me, promising all sorts of favors if she would.

“‘Think of all the trials I have had to undergo,’ says I, ‘to make me fretful!’

“‘And do you think *I* have had no trials?’ says she. ‘You don't know what trials are.’ But at last she relented; and I was puffed and frizzed to my heart's content.”

Now it so happened that Mrs. Downey had also been undecided as to the style of head-dress she should adopt for the occasion. Her own taste was an extremely neat tulle cappee, set off with satin ribbons, and long flowing strings down the back; and she had brought such an article of head-gear to the Folly that afternoon, intending to wear it. But then the barber came; and her friends persuaded her to have her hair puffed and frizzled. She felt afterwards that she had compromised the dignity of her position as Mr. Daskill's aunt in allowing herself to be thus influenced against her judgment, and was quite melancholy on the subject when she reached the bride's home and beheld Mrs. Fenway.

Now Mr. Daskill, who delighted in a large style of talk, and

especially in magnifying the merits of everybody and everything connected in any way with himself (even his dog and his horse were the most extraordinary dog and horse ; and if he had occasion to mention his boots, they were the finest boots this side of Paris), — Mr. Daskill, I say, having intimated to Mrs. Fenway that his aunt was a model of elegance, had strictly balanced the account by representing to Mrs. Downey that his future mother-in-law was a pattern of perfection. And the truth is that Mrs. Fenway did look surprisingly neat and handsome in her black moire-antique and tulle cappee, when the two ladies met for a moment on the evening of the wedding. Immediately, beneath its calm exterior, tumultuous emotions agitated the Downey breast ; and puffs and frizzles became perfectly preposterous (so she declared) for a widow lady of fifty.

“Don’t I look like a top-knot chicken?” she said solemnly to a friend who accompanied her, stretching up her long neck before the dressing-room mirror.

“I think myself the cappee was more becoming to you,” replied the lady, — one of those charming friends who know how to give counsel with perfect safety to their own reputation for astuteness who withhold their judgment on any point about which you need sincere and sound advice, until after you have decided what course to take, and are sorry for it, *then* shake the head, look sadly wise, and say oracularly, “I was sure the other way was better!” making you feel as comfortable in your mind as possible.

“Why did n’t you tell me so before it was too late?” says the model of elegance, — hardly a model of patience, — as she turns and tips her top-knot in the glass.

But was it too late? Carriages would be coming and going between Mrs. Fenway’s house and the Folly until eight o’clock. Mrs. Downey formed a sudden resolution. Remark-
ing that she had forgotten something, she went out, stepped

into the first returning vehicle, rode to the Folly, put on her cappee over her puffs and frizzles, and rode back, triumphant in her turn.

“We had it all arranged beforehand” (Mrs. Fenway continued her narrative) “that the minister who was to perform the ceremony (none of our common clergymen would do, but Mr. Daskill had brought a distinguished divine from Buffalo) was to stand at the farther end of the room, and I and my husband were to come in, and take our places at his right and left hand, to give away the bride. I was n’t ready till the last minute, and I was dreadfully flustered when I found they were all waiting for me. I was flushed from my puffing and frizzing; and to reduce my high color to a more genteel tone, I had used powder, in too much of a hurry, it seems, for my husband said I looked ring-streaked and speckled, like Jacob’s cattle. But he told me not to mind, he was worse off; and he showed me one of his gloves, which had burst open like so much white paper. It was too late to think of another pair, for he said he had been an hour getting those on, and ’t was the hardest hour’s work he had done for a fortnight. I was horrified; but he said, never mind, he would keep that hand in his pocket, or behind him, under his coat-tails; but that was one of his jokes.

“At last we started. I suppose my nervousness had given him the idea that we must rush to our places with all our might, for away he strode! It was always the hardest thing in the world for me to keep step with him — we look more like a duck and a sand-hill crane walking together than anything else under the canopy of heaven. And now he stalked in, taking enormous strides (you know what his legs are!) and dragging me after him, tripping over my skirts, — when I was n’t on ’em he was, — so that I came within one of pitching headforemost at the minister. My husband made all sorts of fun of himself, when I scolded him afterwards he

said he could feel his hair and his coat-tails streaming behind him in the wind; but that, of course, was only his odd way of setting out a thing. The room was packed full of people, with only just a lane left open from the door; but 't was still as death; you could have heard a pin drop. The bride and bridegroom followed slowly enough to make up for our stampede, and I had time to recover myself, and raise my eyes a little.

"Then, what do you think I saw, — like a clump of elderberry blossoms on a tall, thin bush beside the lane? A tull cappee! And who do you suppose the bush was, — after all my worry and fret to get myself puffed and frizzed like her? Mr. Daskill's aunt, for all the world! I felt as if I should sink into the floor; for of course she carried it with such an air you'd have sworn cappees *over* puffs and frizzes were all the style for ladies of our time of life; and it was n't till afterwards that I found out the best part of the joke, — that as I had complimented her by going into puffs and frizzes, she had put on her cappee to pattern after the fashionable and distinguished bride's mother. My first impulse was to run back and slip on my cappee again, but that would have been too absurd! The bride and bridegroom were coming in, and glad enough I was, for they took all eyes, of course.

"And now I had something else to think of besides my own foolishness and vanity. Mr. Daskill was looking younger and better than I ever saw him before, and Marian" — the tears rushed into Mrs. Fenway's eyes as she went on — "O sir, she was the loveliest picture! She appeared in a cloud of white lace, with an illusion veil reaching to the floor. Her low neck and short sleeves showed to perfection her delicate color, — it was just as fresh and rosy as an infant's. I soon forgot my own mortification in my pride in her; and well might Mr. Daskill —"

But here the tears got into the mother's voice also, and she paused, overcome by her recollections of those days.

"Yet it seemed there was to be no end to the awkward events of that night," she resumed with a smile, wiping her moist eyes. "At the most solemn moment, just as the clergyman was asking Adolphus if he took Marian to be his wedded wife, promising to love, honor, and cherish her (a very touching and solemn question, sir, don't you think it is? and how many that marry hear it with their ears, and answer it with their lips, and make the vow which should be the holiest and deepest word they ever uttered in their lives, without once feeling what it really means!)—just at that moment, I say, when we were all attention, our dog Franco came into the room, wagging his tail, and peering about him from under his great shaggy ears and eyebrows, and stopped right behind the bridegroom. All the young folks began to giggle; then, just as Mr. Daskill opened his lips to say, 'I do,' the dog, astonished, I suppose, at the crowd and the hush, opened his mouth, and gave such a bark as put everybody out of countenance, and even the minister had to stop and cough, and have recourse to his handkerchief. Only poor Marian—she looked terribly distressed; and Mr. Daskill—I knew by the expression of his face that Franco would have died a sudden and cruel death, if it had n't been for the restraining circumstances of the occasion. As it was, Walter dragged the brute out by the collar, amidst a general rustle and movement, such as you've remarked when a large assembly laughs inside, and you can almost *hear* a multitude of faces twisting, and puckering, and trying not to smile.

"Well, order was restored, and the ceremony was concluded. Marian was married!" (Mrs. Fenway sighed, took a pinch of snuff, and proceeded.) "She I had toiled for, and hoped for, and schemed for, not always wisely, I am aware now, but according to the best of my judgment then;

mothers are so blinded by their affections, or their pride, you know, sir. The great step was taken : our child was no longer our child ; she belonged to another ; we had committed her destiny into his hands, for good or ill. For once all my petty cares, and vanities, and chagrins were forgotten in the great and solemn thought of what marriage was, and what life was, and what must follow, sooner or later, whether we marry rich or marry poor. My husband kissed the bride, and then held both her hands, and looked at her, while the tears ran down his cheeks, which I had scarce ever seen wet before ; and then said to Mr. Daskill, ‘ Be good to her ; she is our darling child ! ’ while he — ”

After a brief interruption, the good woman found voice to close her narrative : —

“ Just as the company was breaking up it began to rain, and a good many nice clothes got wet. The carriages kept going and coming, and at last Mr. Daskill and Marian went too, for he had taken it into his head that they would pass the night with his friends at the Folly. Strange, was n’t it, that our darling girl should finally leave our house in a raging thunder-storm ? They got into the carriage at the door, and drove off into the darkness ; when suddenly the sky seemed to open, and the last I saw of them was by a blaze of lightning going up the road, — the carriage, the horses, the trees, everything, standing out for an instant in a glare brighter than noonday ; then the sky shut again, and the thunder bellowed, and tumbled, and crashed overhead, and the rain poured ; and we went back into the house, feeling so lonely, so lonely, now that all was over.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

MARIAN'S NEW HOME.

WE have all noticed and admired, no doubt, the skilful manner in which the artist of the modern stage contrives to bring his fairy spectacle to a surprising (if not very lifelike) conclusion. Possibly, in the final tableau, the heroine sails miraculously aloft in an illuminated shell; or she strikes a pleasing attitude at the apex of a pyramid of ineffably lovely creatures in gauzy frills, while from the magnificent array of turbans and trousers and scimitars in the background bursts a soul-thrilling chorus; and from the flashing colored lights, burned in the wings regardless of expense, a wondrous pyrotechnic glory pours over all. The troop remains after the first descent of the curtain for an encore, which is sure to be called for; once more the orchestra peals forth its brazen thunder, up go the glorified girls on one leg again, or the enchanted shell ascends with its bewitching freight towards invisible pulleys in the roof. Then, when all is over, and the curtain is down for good, away scamper the thinly clad nymphs, shivering in the windy *coulisses*, to their dressing-rooms, where they cast off their tawdry apparel (you would be astonished to see how very tawdry it really is, and what scrawny necks and arms often emerge from the paint and tinsel), and put on their common, sometimes their very common, street dresses, in haste to get home to their attics. Old heads in town understand this sort of thing; but you, gentle youth from the rural districts, are hardly prepared to believe that the kind and attentive (though by no means ravishingly beautiful) young

woman who will wait upon you at dinner to-morrow, in the crowded and steaming third-class restaurant, is one of the blissful beings you admired in the play. Question her, however, and she will probably inform you (for she is a frank, good creature, with no romantic nonsense about her) that she is a table-girl here by day (at a salary of three dollars a week and her board), and also a supernumerary of the theatre (pay twenty-five cents a night, when her services are required), — now serving meats and puddings to gross mortals, and now appearing as a fairy with golden wings. The moral of which thing is not to be dwelt upon; for has it not often enough been made tiresome by dull pedants? “All the world’s a stage,” and so forth,—from Shakspeare down.

Yet there are certain phases of life which, more than others, remind us of these strange contrasts betwixt being and seeming; and foremost among them is the ceremonious and showy wedding. See the ladies in their superb costumes! the gentlemen in voluminous shirt-fronts and swallow-tail coats! How brilliant, how enviable, their existence seems! this glittering, smiling surface hides so much. Then, as centre-piece to the fine tableau, behold the bridegroom and bride,—he so fortunate, so noble, she so beautiful and pure; and both so far removed from the petty faults and vulgar cares of this work-day world. Music and perfume, and eternal youth and flowers, encompass and enchant them. Lift the bridal veil, and you look upon a lovelly face: but lift the veil of seeming, and what do you behold? The curtain falls, too, on this pleasing tableau; and straightway, at every turn, the stark realities of life beset the actors. The bridal raiment is laid aside, and with it, too often, the white vesture of youthful purity and aspiration, giving place to the coarse garment of sordid thoughts and low desires; and she who appeared last night as a fairy, is to-day a servant of the flesh-pots, ministering to the gross necessities of man. Too often only that; but not always, thank your chaste

stars, sweet maiden, happy wife ! Love keeps his perfume in the hearts of some, undestroyed by baser fires ; sweetening thereby toil, and poverty, and sorrows of the spirit and the flesh, and making the future, if different, yet better and more blessed than was dreamed. Ah, madam ! did not you and I know well enough what each was thinking, when we exchanged glances at the great wedding in the church the other day ? and when your eyes grew misty, and your lips moved dumbly, did I not rightly divine that your great, warm heart was pleading with our fair sister at the altar ? “ O dear, dear child ! ” (you were saying) “ you come to this shrine, like the rest of us, in an *illusion* veil ; and when that is put aside, you are to find life so changed from what it seems now ! — for that is inevitable. But oh, do not, do not forget your early dreams ! if he is gross and worldly, do not sink to his level, but lift him up to yours ; learn patience, long-suffering, and kindness ; and cherish for yourself and for him a chastening, holy faith in the ever-present spirit, comfort and guide of every true and contrite soul ! ”

If ever there was a bride one would have seemed justified in pronouncing exempt from the coarse contrasts which so often succeed the gay wedding, that bride was Marian. Fresh and blooming from a brief but delightful bridal tour, she returned to pleasant Waybrook village and her elegant new home. If one could not be happy surrounded by those lovely slopes and lawns, those tender young groves and bright fountains, then where under the dome of heaven could one be happy ? Verdure and blossoms, and flash of waters, and melody of birds without ; pictures in gorgeous frames, statue and statuette, and bust on pedestal, on bracket, and in niche, portfolios and bric-à-brac, within ; loveliness and luxury everywhere. Into what a little Eden the place had, in a few short weeks, been transformed ! And the author of this change, — the noble Adolphus, — was he not the devoted

lover still, proud of his beautiful young bride, and lavishly generous in adorning her person and gratifying her tastes ?

Tall and prim Mrs. Downey, who had kept the house in their absence, welcomed them to it in her stateliest manner on their return. Marian kissed her impulsively, and said, "O Mrs. Downey, you don't know what a relief, what a happiness it is to me to feel that you are going to be with us ; for I have learned from *him* what a dear, good, sensible aunt you are. I shall be so glad of your company always ; and your counsel will be so necessary and useful to poor little inexperienced me !"

"Thank you, my dear !" said Mrs. Downey, after the first surprise of the bride's embrace ; and folded her prim hands upon her belt again.

"She is a model housekeeper, as you see," observed Adolphus.

"Oh, I see, and I admire !" And Marian glanced from room to room with increasing delight.

She chatted, she wandered about, she unpacked some trinkets, and at last, left alone, seated herself by a window of her room, which overlooked all Waybrook, her early haunts, and the humble homes she knew. There were the mill-pond and the winding stream, and the noisy fork factory, whose rapid trip-hammers could be heard thus far away, now faint, now loud, as the wind blew. There was her father's quaint, old-fashioned roof, — dear old roof still ! — and Lottie's home by the mill-dam, just visible behind trees. And there were two roofs on Mill Street, the sight of which filled her soul with sweet and bitter memories.

"To think that Julia should be living there, after all, and I here in the house her father built for her ! Oh, what a change, in so few months, for both of us ! I think she does n't love me any more. Can she be — No, Julia Farnell could never be envious of any one ! But I wish it was n't just as it is ; something is not right."

At last her fancy, long restrained from a sense of wifely duty, flew on to that other house, which she had walked past in such a frenzy of doubt and despair, the night before Will started on his journey. She wondered now at the violence of her emotions then; and trembled to think what might have happened had she entered, or met Will in that rash ride to the railroad station the next morning. Would she be Mr. Daskill's wife now, and mistress of this beautiful home? Probably not. Did she regret her marriage? How could she? And yet —

Her eyes were filled with tears, when, hearing a movement, she looked round, and saw Adolphus standing in the half-open door. His countenance was gloomy and disturbed, and he was turning to go away, when, swiftly drying her tears, she ran up to him, and hung upon his shoulder, and with a sweet, fond smile, asked him to come in.

"I seem to have come at the wrong time," he said, regarding her searchingly.

"Oh, no! *you* can never come at the wrong time!" Marian replied, drawing him into the room.

"Do you wish to see *him*?" he asked, with grave concern.

Now, he who was in her mind a minute before had already been alluded to by Adolphus in ways which convinced her that he knew more of her heart's secrets than she would ever have dared to confess. It seemed to her now that he read her very thoughts; and, thrown into confusion by his question, and his very singular look, she answered unguardedly, —

"No, I do not think it best; I have no wish to see him."

"Whom do you think I mean?" said Adolphus.

"I suppose — the one you have spoken of before," faltered the poor girl guiltily.

"Then *he* is the cause of these tears!" he exclaimed.

Marian saw her mistake and tried to recover herself.

"Oh, no! I was sitting by the window, — and do you won-

der that I thought of many things in my life? A thought of him did cross my mind with the rest, — but not a regret, not a wish ever to see him again, believe me.”

Adolphus walked away impatiently, and with lowering brows; but presently returned, and said in a softened tone, “I was not speaking of him at all. I meant my son. I told you he would be here, and you have not yet asked to see him.”

Marian was dismayed to find how her own guilty conscience had betrayed her. She knew, too, how painfully sensitive he was on the subject which had been in *his* mind, and hastened to say, “I do wish to see him! But I supposed, when it was best that I should, you would tell me.”

“He is not so well as I hoped to find him. But I want you to see each other.” Mr. Daskill rang, and sent a message to Mrs. Downey. “Sit down,” he said to Marian, while he himself paced the room uneasily. “We must be careful not to excite him.”

She had never seen him so pale. If there was a being in the world for whom Adolphus cherished a pure, unselfish regard, it was this unfortunate youth, whose infirmity was a constantly deepening wound both to his affections and his pride. He was, she perceived, extremely solicitous that her first impressions of the boy should be favorable; and she firmly resolved to please him.

Soon footsteps were heard; at which Adolphus, standing by Marian's chair, laid his hand on her shoulder, and said, “Be very quiet now, and feel kindly towards him for my sake.” Then, leaning in a careless attitude he proceeded to talk on some indifferent subject, while Mrs. Downey ushered in his son.

“Ah, Clarence!” he said, with feigned surprise. “Come in! Here is your new mother. This is my son, Clarence, my dear.”

Marian reached out her hand with her most winning smile.

A pale, serious, well-dressed, and decorous boy of sixteen advanced to meet her. There was nothing strange or repulsive in his appearance, except, perhaps, a certain sallowness and flabbiness of face, and a listless expression of the eyes, which were prone to become vacant and wandering the moment his attention ceased to be fixed.

"I am very happy to know you, Clarence," she said, a new and strange feeling, an almost motherly tenderness, gushing up in her heart at sight of him.

He regarded her with childlike simplicity and admiration, and replied, "You look so good! I am glad you have married my papa."

"Are you? Thank you, dear Clarence. I see you and I are going to be the best of friends," she answered pleasantly.

The father was evidently relieved to see the long-expected — we might almost say the long-dreaded — interview passing off so well. But suddenly the boy's thoughts seemed to forsake him in the midst of something he was saying: he paused, with a meaningless smile, and his eyes began to wander. Adolphus, who had been carefully watching him, made a sign to Mrs. Downey.

"Come, Clarence," she said, "I have something to show you up-stairs"; and was taking him away, sending him out before her, and bowing statelily to cover his retreat, when a sudden fall resounded through the apartments, sharp and loud, as if some inanimate thing had been hurled to the floor.

With a cry of anguish, Mr. Daskill darted forward; and Marian, following, saw him snatch up in his arms the insensible form of his son. She flew to his assistance, but he motioned her back, unwilling that she should be horrified by the spectacle of the child he loved, wrenched and convulsed by the demon of epilepsy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A VISIT FROM THE OLD FOLKS.

WEDDING calls at the Folly now became the sensation in Waybrook, and old and new friends of the bride, appearing in their good clothes and their best behavior, saw the splendid residence, the polished proprietor, and the charming young mistress, — all that lovely, glittering surface of things, — and were filled with boundless admiration and envy.

It was not long before Miles Fenway and his wife, and Geordie and Lottie rode up the hill one evening, behind Geordie's prancing span, and made Marian a visit. Ah, how delighted the poor child was to see them! She had been home but once since her return; and her heart, full of new experiences, yearned towards her mother and sister. She had a thousand things to tell them.

"It is so hard for me to keep away from you," she said, embracing them again and again, as she carried them off to the privacy of her room. "Adolphus laughs at me for feeling as I do, and I'm afraid he will think I am homesick, — which I am not, of course."

"Of course not! how absurd!" said Mrs. Fenway, who, much as she had been preyed upon by secret misgivings, now dismissed them, and turned her eyes exultingly upon her daughter's glory.

Meanwhile, Adolphus showed Miles and Geordie about the premises, by the light of a golden sunset.

"Hanged if ye hain't got a jimmy sort of a box here, Mr. Daskill, anyhow!" said Geordie. "I like a nice place; don't

you?" turning to Mr. Fenway, who was coming behind him through the shrubbery.

His tall, spare figure pensively bent, Miles mused, and answered, "It is very pleasant, very pleasant indeed."

"I expect to build in a year or two," said Geordie; "and I'd put up jest as nice a house as this, if 't was n't for one or two things. First, it ain't convenient, as the elephant said, when he was invited to climb a tree. Second, I'm afraid I should n't fit into it exactly, after I'd got it. I've sense enough to know that I'm a plain sort of a chap, and I should never feel at home in any but a plain sort of house; what's more, I should never *look* at home. If there's anything ridiculous, it's common folks in clothes or houses too fine for 'em."

"Cheap pictures in costly frames," suggested Adolphus.

"Exactly. But let me say, Mr. Daskill, that you and Marian seem to fit this frame to perfection."

"Well, — thank you, that's a compliment," said Adolphus, well pleased with Geordie's sincere praise.

"Yes," said Miles, still musing, "I enjoy a fine place; and I don't know but I like it just as well with another man the owner. The comfortable old nest for me! It's lucky for us, Geordie, that we are contented with the necessities of life, for it is n't probable we shall ever have the luxuries."

"I don't know about that," said Adolphus, as they joined the ladies in the parlor. "I've learned a good deal more about the matter I proposed to you, since I've been away. Did Marian tell you? I left her at my uncle's, and went over with him to visit the property. It is certainly the finest chance for a fortune I ever saw. But, excuse me! I must n't talk business in the presence of the ladies."

"Yes, you may," said Mrs. Fenway. "I want you to talk *that* business to my husband, and talk it *into* him, if you can."

"That won't be so easy," said Miles. "I believe in a man's attending to his own legitimate business; and mine is making forks, not speculating."

"You are very rude, it seems to me," said Mrs. Fenway in a low tone. "Don't you see? You imply that Mr. Daskill is not attending to his own business."

"Not at all," Miles answered aloud. "It may be his business to start new enterprises. I've started one, and with hard fighting I have carried it through with some little success. I'm not ready to take hold of another."

"You need n't give any time at all to it," said Adolphus. "You can make a fortune with your hands in your pockets."

"I rather think I should have to take out a hand from time to time with a little money in it."

"A small outlay at the beginning is all that will be required. We have a bond of the property, which does n't expire till the tenth of August. By paying twelve thousand dollars we secure it, and have a year to pay the remainder. It is situated in the most productive region; and it would have been snatched up long ago, if others had known as much about it as we do."

"Do listen to him, Mr. Fenway! You don't know what a chance you may be throwing away," Mrs. Fenway entreated.

"What is it?" said Geordie. "Ile?"

"Yes, Mr. Lorkins, — oil. And a chance for you if you like."

"No, I thank you. I've been to the diggings, and learned a thing or two. One man strikes, and makes a fortune; another buries a fortune, and never sees ile."

"Well, Geordie, you've said it!" exclaimed Mrs. Fenway pettishly. "As if you knew more about it than Mr. Daskill does! The idea!"

"There's a good deal in what he says," Adolphus frankly admitted. "I should be as unwilling as anybody to take hold of an ordinary oil speculation. But here we've a sure thing. I know about it."

"When you sink a well and see the ile flow, then you may say you know; but not much before," laughed Geordie.

"I've discovered oil on the banks of a stream that runs through the property, — though that's a secret, mind," said Adolphus confidentially.

"I would n't take even that for a sure sign," replied Geordie. "Oh, don't I know how things are managed down there? Travelling through the country, you stop at a farm-house to get a drink. 'You're welcome to that,' says the honest old farmer, 'but 't ain't very good water.' 'What's the matter with 't?' says you. 'Times,' says he, 'when the springs get low, there's more or less ile in 't; it's been perty bad for a week now,' says he; and lets down the bucket. Sure enough, there's a little ily scum on the water when it comes up. 'Why don't you bore here?' says you. 'Hain't got the needful,' says he. 'Will ye sell?' says you. 'Oh no! don't want to sell my farm!' says he; 'my old woman never'd consent to that. It's just as good a farm as we want,' says he, 'only if 't wa'n't for the pesky ile.' Meanwhile you draw, and draw again, and ile keeps coming up in the bucket, and your interest in the well keeps coming up, — it's the sweetest water ever you tasted; so, before you've done with it, he concludes he will sell, and his old woman does give her consent, and you've paid the biggest price for a drink ever you paid in your life. Honest old farmer lets the knife into you clean up to the handle. You buy him out, and go to boring; but you never can get ile out of that or any other well on the place, without you put ile into it first, as he did."

Mrs. Fenway fidgeted, and frowned, and took snuff, while Geordie was talking; and now turned to Adolphus.

"Old birds are not to be caught with chaff. We mean business," he said sententiously, with the imposing air of cool superiority he had; while Mrs. Fenway gave Geordie a look which signified plainly, "There! don't talk any

more nonsense to him! What do you know about such things?"

Long-limbed Mr. Fenway lounged rather awkwardly on the elegant sofa, while Adolphus proceeded to unfold his plans.

"There are a hundred and forty acres of land, which we purchase for sixty thousand dollars. We make our first payment of twelve thousand dollars—four thousand apiece, if there are three of us—on the tenth of August; and that is the only payment we shall be called upon to make out of our own pockets."

"How so?" Mr. Fenway inquired.

"We divide the property into three blocks, as we say; I own one, my uncle one, and you one. These we subdivide into shares, and put them into a company, say twelve or fifteen hundred shares, par value, one hundred dollars a share. We can let our friends in at the bottom, if we like; and we can sell to first purchasers as low as we please, till we get the thing started. In two or three months oil will be developed,—a forest of derricks will go up all over our hundred and forty acres,—and our shares, instead of being worth a hundred dollars, will bring five, ten, twenty times that. Long before our second payment comes due, we shall have sold enough to pay for the entire property. Then see what a splendid thing we have!" And for the next ten minutes Mr. Daskill glittered all over with dazzling figures.

Mrs. Fenway understood very little of the scheme, but saw with rapture the promised golden result.

"Now I hope you are convinced, Mr. Fenway!" she exclaimed.

"It is all very fine, very fine," said Miles. "But I've neither the fancy nor the money for a speculation. Go to Ward Farnell and old Carolus: Farnell has the fancy,—he is revelling in grand schemes since his failure,—and Carolus has the money."

"There are plenty of men with both, who would jump at the chance to go in with us," replied Adolphus. "That is n't what I want, — I want you to make a good thing. If you decline, my uncle and I propose to swing the thing ourselves."

"He won't decline," said Mrs. Fenway. "Mr. Carolus will lend him the money. You know, Mr. Fenway, what he said to you the other day."

Miles laughed. "I met the rickety old gentleman on the street, — a fine summer morning, though rather cool, — and he was muffled to the ears, for he can't bear a breath of the north wind, even in July; he was clattering along the sidewalk in his old cloak, with his big stick, nodding, and muttering to himself, and looking more like a half-civilized, ancient, shaved baboon than anything quite human. He stopped short when he saw me, ran his eye up my timber, as of old, till he got to the masthead, then began to strike the ground with his stick, and chatter. 'T was a mistake, a mistake, Miles Fenway!' says he, alluding, as he often does, to the time when he refused to lend me money. 'I did n't know ye then. The wisest are sometimes deceived. But I've watched ye, I've watched ye. I've seen ye coming up, coming up, till now you've got to be —' 'Six feet three and a fraction,' said I." And Miles added, "I am always made to realize that that is coming up considerably, when I stand and talk down to that little old cloak-full of shaking anatomy on three sticks.

"'Hark ye, Miles Fenway, I'm always ready to correct an error; and that was an error. If you want a thousand — two, three, four thousand — any time, say the word. I know ye now, I know ye now!' and he smacked and stabbed the sidewalk, and went on clattering."

"Now, Mr. Daskill," said Mrs. Fenway, when the company had done laughing at her husband's mimicry of the old miser, "I'll leave it to you if that don't look like the hand of Providence in this very thing!"

"He knew very well I did n't want the money," said Miles. "'To him that hath shall be given,' seems to be the rule in worldly as well as in spiritual things. If I should go to him when I was actually in need, you'd see the old stick come down at my toes, to a different tune. 'Not a cent, not a cent, Miles Fenway! You've come to the wrong man, sir, the wrong man!'"

"But you're not in need, and he knows it. Now, I hope you will listen to my advice in this thing. Don't you think, Mr. Daskill, wives are often capable of giving their husbands good advice even in matters of business?"

Adolphus was decidedly of that opinion.

"Women are certainly better judges of character than men are," he said, with a happy consciousness that Mrs. Fenway's impressions of him had always been more favorable than her husband's.

"I should hardly say better *judges*," Miles replied. "They have generally finer perceptions; but fine perceptions don't always lead to correct conclusions. My wife will sometimes read a person quick as lightning; yet she's a good deal more apt to be deceived in people than I am, simply because she allows herself to be imposed upon by appearances, and lets her prejudices run away with her judgment."

"Mr. Fenway!" said Mrs. Fenway, with an arrogant toss of her chin, "I wish you'd name one instance!"

"I think I might name several. There was that Canadian I hired one year, you remember. I had n't the least confidence in him. But he was astonishingly polite, and he told a heart-breaking story about losing his wife, and being left with six young children, and how he was persecuted by all his relations (always a bad sign); and that so wrought upon your feelings that you were for taking him into the family at once. The result of which was, Mr. Daskill, — yes, I will tell it now I've begun, though my wife is trying to stop me, — we got up

one fine morning, and found our polite Frenchman missing, with my watch, my wife's silver thimble and spoons, twenty-five dollars in cash out of my pocket, and a horse out of the barn. I got the horse again; but watch, spoons, thimble, money, and Monsieur Parley-voo, we never saw anything more of them."

"Well, that was once. I acknowledge I was deceived, as I think almost any woman would have been, hearing his doleful story. But I defy you to name another instance!"

"Do you? Well, another man came along once after that, and told a sad story, and applied for work. His appearance was repulsive, in consequence of an unwholesome complexion, and a ragged yellow beard, which there was a little too much of. My wife was prejudiced against hairy faces in those days; she isn't now, luckily for you, Mr. Daskill. On the contrary, she has been trying to persuade me not to shave" (Mr. Fenway wore only side-whiskers) "ever since you came to town. She is looking daggers at me; but the truth is the truth."

"Why don't you tell the whole truth, while you're about it?" cried the irritated little lady. "Nobody but foreigners and stragglers wore full beards in those days; and they always looked so nasty. I gave the man a bowl of bread and milk; and Marian, who was a little thing then, after seeing him eat, came running to me, and said, 'O mamma! that man is eating your clean victuals with his dirty mouth.' She was horrified, and I did n't wonder."

"The man was a carpenter, travelling with his family to Ohio, when he was taken sick, and got out of money. I believed in the fellow, spite of his yellow face and rough beard; sent for his family, who were stopping in an old barn down the creek, kept them a week, and gave them all, among other things, a good washing, — though water, as I may as well say here, was a scarce article with us then. Our well failed every summer; then the cistern was liable to give out, and we had

to fetch water from the pond, and from a spring over on a hillside, eighty rods away."

"You have splendid water now," said Adolphus. "I've always admired that brimming tank-full in your wash-room; and the water in your fish-pond is rather cold, is n't it?" giving Mrs. Fenway an inquiring look, in which there was the slightest twinkling reminiscence of her memorable plunge-bath in March.

"I'll tell you how we came by those conveniences," said Miles. "In a few days a letter came, enclosing money for my sallow-faced carpenter, from his brother; and in going away he wanted to give me something to remember him by. He had a few tools with him, among the rest a spirit-level, which he made me a present of. Fourth of July morning, — a few days after, — I was amusing myself with it, when I took a look across it at the spring. It had never occurred to me that that was any higher than the house; and I could hardly believe my eyes when the level showed it to be at least twelve or fifteen feet higher, — a fact I might have remained ignorant of to this day, if it had n't been for my hairy-featured carpenter. It was n't long before I had pipes laid, and the water brought to our premises, so that my wife might be reminded every day of her life that, once in a great while at least, I am right and she is wrong."

"Oh! well! a solitary instance like that!" said Mrs. Fenway, bridling. "The idea! But that has nothing to do with the matter in hand. Mr. Daskill will bear witness that I am right now. What is the use of plodding all our lives for a bare subsistence, when by a bold move a fortune may be made in a year or two? Come, I want to live in a better house than we live in now before I die."

"That's what I've been expecting to hear," said Mr. Fenway. "Ah, Marian, you'll have many such wishes to answer for, I'm afraid. How many people, do you suppose,

who see you here will go away contented with their old houses?"

"I hope I sha'n't cause any of them to want what it would be wrong for them to have," said Marian. "I like beautiful things. I believe in them. They are like sunshine on a fountain; they make life so much brighter and pleasanter. I know you think so, father!"

"Yes, in a measure; and I fervently pray," said Miles, giving her a look of unspeakable tenderness, "that your outward blessings will be all sunbeams to you. I do believe in beauty, and the rational enjoyment of it. But many people want the pretty things you speak of more for the sake of making a show with them than for any better reason. And remember, my child, that beauty is n't confined to works of art, and fine houses and estates. The sunshine which comes down through the boughs of our old elm-tree at home, and lights up the speckled sides of the trout in the sparkling water, is about all I can stand; and as I watch it, some peaceful Sunday morning, when the bells are ringing, and the robins and hangbirds are feeding their young ones in the branches overhead, and the swallows are twittering, my fountain, as you call it, my spring of happiness, is about as full and bright as any outward circumstances could make it. This is my idea," added Miles, who no longer looked long-limbed and awkward, in the midst of so much elegance, but quaintly and austerely graceful, in the free attitude he had unconsciously assumed, and with his roused, beaming, and benignant countenance, "that if we should spend in cultivating an appreciation of the common daily beauties and blessings heaven pours about us, bountiful as the air, a little of the time and thought we give to getting money and making a show with it, we should enjoy a happiness we have never dreamed of yet."

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. CAROLUS CORRECTS AN ERROR.

THE conversation was interrupted by the arrival of more company. But that was not the last of it.

"Well, you did do a smart thing this evening, if never before!" Mrs. Fenway vigorously reminded her husband, on their return home. "I'd confine myself to making forks, in future, if I were you, and not make any more sermons."

"You think my forks have more point?" said good-natured Miles.

"I thought your sermon this evening had point enough, and you aimed it right at Mr. Daskill! Anybody could see that."

"There's one stupid person who did n't. It came upon me to say what I did, and I'm not sorry. However, I think I'll attend pretty strickly to fork-making after this."

"I would!" said Mrs. Fenway shortly.

"And let sermons and oil alone."

"That's a different thing!" And she proceeded to curtain-lecture her husband on that theme, until sleep mildly interposed, and, in the midst of her urgent appeals, wafted his soul away in peaceful dreams.

She continued to agitate the subject during his waking hours, and got Mr. Daskill to talk with him again, as the tenth of August drew near. At last — it was on the eighth — Adolphus came in when Mr. Fenway was at dinner, and intimated, in his cheerful way, that if Miles had provided for his part of the first payment, he would like a draft for the amount.

"My part?" said Mr. Fenway, surprised. "I have n't provided for anything. I have n't agreed to anything."

Mr. Daskill, surprised in his turn, looked inquiringly at Mrs. Fenway.

"Well ! I suppose I may as well say it," remarked the lady. "Although you did n't exactly agree to it, you talked so favorably that I told Mr. Daskill I had no doubt you would. And I'm sure you will. I suppose he is depending on it now."

"Oh, no !" said Mr. Daskill. "It makes a little awkwardness, that's all. My uncle wrote me that he had a capital chance to place the other third ; but, on the strength of what you said, I wrote back, telling him I would take care of it. He accordingly looks to me for eight thousand dollars. I've provided only four. I don't like to spare any more — I am operating so largely in grain and wool this season. Suppose we make this arrangement. You get the money from Mr. Carolus, and I give you my memorandum for it ; leaving it optional with you, any time within a year, to take the block we have reserved for you, or leave it. When you find what has cost you four thousand dollars, worth fifty or a hundred thousand, as it is sure to be in twelve months, I don't think you'll be anxious to get rid of it ; but I shall be very glad to take it off your hands, in any case."

"There ! I am sure there can't be anything more liberal than that !" said Mrs. Fenway.

In his chair, pushed back from the table, Miles sat thoughtful a minute, then said, —

"I can't afford to take any risks, and I don't want you to take any for me. But, since you are depending on me for the money, I'll borrow it for you, if you will engage to see that it is paid. That's all I ask."

"Oh, well !" replied Adolphus, with overflowing generosity, "I'll take care of that. And I'll secure you a chance to throw away fifty thousand dollars, within a year, if you want to." And he gave Mrs. Fenway a significant look.

"We'll go over and see Mr. Carolus," said Miles.

They had not gone far when they met the old man on the street.

"How are you to-day, Mr. Carolus?" said Mr. Fenway.

"Tough, tough!" replied the old man, stopping, and leaning on his stick. "The old miser ain't dead yet. The old miser's good for ten or a dozen years more, hi, hi! That's what they call me, and I let 'em. Hard words break nobody's bones. Old miser's as good a word as any. But I'll live to spite 'em. I'll live!" And he jerked his cane up and set it down again sharply.

"Why, who has been calling you hard names to-day, Mr. Carolus?"

"The Wintergreen sisters, blast 'em! As if I had n't a right to raise my rent. I've knowed 'em, Mr. What's-yer-name, ever since they was gals; three of 'em; tick—tack—tow, three in a row, young fellows used to say; pretty, folks well off, might have got married, but they set up that they must marry smart; had a little money, afraid to let a husband touch it without he could add to it; so one after t'other they went through the bars into the old maids' pastur',—tick—tack—tow, three in a row, by Jehoshaphat! and a mighty poor pastur' they found it. They've been paying fifty dollars a year for their half of the house. I told 'em I was going to raise—I must have fifty-five this year; and now I'm an old miser, and what will become of my money when I die? That's none of their business; I've looked out for that. They paid the rent, blast 'em! and I ain't dead yet!"

"But five dollars a year is a good deal to them," observed Miles.

"It's a good deal to me; five dollars is five dollars; it goes to make up a good round sum, which my relations, that would like it, won't get. Ten times five is fifty; ten times fifty is five hundred; ten times five hundred is five thousand. I learnt the multiplication table when I was a boy, Mr. What's-

yer-name and it's been useful to me. Learn to multiply, learn to multiply, Mr. What's-yer-name!" — the old man brandished his stick at Mr. Daskill. "That's my advice to you."

"I take it very thankfully," said Adolphus.

"He would like to take something else with it, Mr. Carolus. Ten times four hundred is four thousand, I believe?"

"All the world over, Neighbor Fenway. Leastwise it was when I was a boy; I don't think they've changed it since, though there's no knowing when they may. These d—d reformers with their temperance humbug, and women's-rights humbug, and all their d—d humbugs, they'll be reforming the multiplication table next; but I believe ten times four hundred is four thousand as yet, Neighbor Fenway."

"Well, Mr. Carolus, my son-in-law here would like just that sum for a little while,—about how long do you think, Mr. Daskill?"

"We may as well say three months," suggested Adolphus.

"Hey?" cried old Carolus, nodding and tipping over on his cane. "Borrow? want to borrow?"

"Mr. Daskill—" Miles began to explain.

"I don't know Mr. Daskill; never heard of Mr. Daskill. Name ain't on my books at all, not at all!" said the old man grimly.

"It's time it was, Mr. Carolus; he wants four thousand dollars."

"Hi, hi! There's a good many in just that fix; they want four thousand, more or less; generally more. I wish they may get it! I heartily wish they may get it!" And down on the sidewalk went the emphatic walking-stick.

"Then you won't lend?"

"Not to a stranger; never, Neighbor Fenway. It's agin my principles; I would n't give a tinker's dam for his paper. I say his; yours is a different thing. If Miles Fenway wants to borrow, I know Miles Fenway."

"Then let Mr. Daskill give you his note, and I will indorse it."

"I don't want anything of Mr. Daskill's. 'T will be a signature thrown away, so much ink wasted. Economy is my rule. Give me your note, Miles Fenway, and I'll draw you a check in ten minutes."

As this was about what Miles expected, he accompanied the old man home; while Adolphus, repressing an ardent desire to break the insolent old miser's head, went off in haste to telegraph to his uncle.

On a rickety pine table, in a bare room of a bare, dilapidated house, where Mr. Carolus lived, with a housekeeper almost as old and shrivelled and decrepit as himself, the village millionaire made out the promised draft, and received in return Miles Fenway's note of hand, which he carefully examined, and then carefully laid away in a little black iron safe in the corner.

"Mr. Fenway," said he, with a smack, "feel yourself honored. Where's the next man whose paper I would take to that amount without security? I don't know him. I know you; I did n't always. I made a mistake once. Please consider it corrected."

CHAPTER XXX.

JULIA FARNELL AT THE FOLLY.

YOUNG Clarence suffered from repeated attacks of his distemper, after his arrival at the Folly; and more than once in the presence of the bride. For her husband's sake, and out of sincere pity for the stricken youth, Marian tried to overcome the feeling of horror with which his paroxysms inspired her. But, weak and inexperienced, and so young, — a spoiled child, accustomed from her earliest years to have everything done for her, and unschooled in the austere lessons of devotion and sacrifice, — strong, womanly self-control and beneficence were not within her power. She shuddered involuntarily at the boy's approach, and turned away her eyes from the epileptic countenance, wild and vacant from a recent convulsion, or inspiring constant dread of another. She loved what was lovely, but lacked that mightier virtue of heroic hearts which enables them serenely to encounter what is loathsome.

After the novelty of his second marriage had worn off a little, and the zest was dulled with which he brought his heart of old experience to drink of this fresh young fountain of life, Adolphus was found to be a man of moods. That easy air of confidence and self-satisfaction with which he met the world, often gave place at home to a cloudy discontent. He had not the petty fault of fretfulness, — his robust temperament and iron nerves saved him from that: but he could be stern, and at times the portentous gloom of his spirit filled the house.

To Marian, formed for happiness as a butterfly for the sunshine, these dark hours of her dear Adolphus were unspeakably dreadful. At first she would fly to him, when she saw him thus, and endeavor to soothe him with caresses and endearments. But she soon found that these were not always welcome. More than once he put her coldly away. He did n't want to be disturbed.

Marian had a gentle, affectionate nature, and she had come to love this man in a way. If not the one above all others to make her supremely happy, he at least possessed the power of making her supremely miserable.

"He loves Clarence better than he does me," she said to herself many times. "He sees my dread of him, and knows that my presence only makes him worse, when I would so gladly do him good!"

Clarence was kept generally secluded; and visitors came and went, and there was music, and there was laughter, and none saw the draped and shadowy shape, the apparition of black Care, that moved through the magnificent rooms, or rose Banquo-like at the board, and often sat all night by the pillow whereon only blissful brows were supposed to rest and dream.

Marian tried to hide her trouble under outward shows of affection, not only from her friends, but from her husband, and even from herself. And who that saw her as they rode gayly through the village streets, — who that witnessed their parting at the door when he went to his business, or their meeting again, when she ran out to him with radiant welcome at his return, — who could have doubted that, whether happy or not, she believed herself so, or was at least resolutely determined to be so?

There was one person whom she would gladly have made a confidante in her present trials as she had done in the past. But there was a coldness between them now. Julia Farnell

had made but one brief and rather formal call upon her, since the marriage of which she did not approve; and Marian, having returned it, brought away that indescribable heavy feeling we have, when a dearly loved friend is lost to us by something that seems worse than death.

"I must give her up, I suppose," said Marian, nursing her wounded heart. But when, after the beginning of the fall term at the seminary, she saw Julia pass and re-pass the house every day, giving her up did not seem so easy. Her affections went out to meet her, and followed her after she had gone by; until Marian, the bride, longed once more for the days when Marian, the school-girl, walked and talked by that dear friend's side.

One day, unable longer to resist this yearning, she went out and waylaid Julia on her return from the school.

"Come, now," she cried, "I am not going to have this! You shall come into the house! Why do you walk by in this way, and never turn your face? as if there were no such person as Marian Fenway in the world."

"Is there?" said Julia softly, as she suffered herself to be led in.

"There always is — for you!" exclaimed Marian fervently. "Don't think because I've changed my name, that my heart has changed in the least."

"Are you sure?" Julia asked with a smile.

"It has not changed towards you," replied Marian, sitting, and holding her friend's hands. "I can't give up a friendship so easily as you do. But then," a quick moisture started in her eyes, "I don't suppose I was ever to you what you were to me; I am so much younger and so much more dependent!"

"There is something in that," said Julia, her own lips quivering as she spoke. "You were more dependent; but, Marian, I was always very fond of you. And my heart has n't

changed so much, either, as you suppose. Circumstances have changed. You have another to depend upon; and I have others depending on me. They take all my time, all my energies, all my life!"

Then Marian saw how weary the once brilliant Julia was, and her heart smote her.

"I know!" she said. "You are wearing out with hard work and care. You have your father, your sisters, the house, the school; and I am so selfish to wish to hold on to you still! I *have* another to depend on, and he is very dear to me, though you don't think so," she added, seeing Julia's sweet, searching, half-pitying look. "But I need you. Don't give me up! Stop in here sometimes, won't you? Be at home here, — you ought to, in this house. I often feel that it belongs to you more than it does to me. What have I done to earn it? And what have you done to forfeit it? O Julia, I may as well say it, I can't be happy in the enjoyment of this beautiful home while I see you walk by looking so forlorn!"

"Forlorn? Do I look forlorn?" said Julia, with a laugh and a blush. "I don't feel so. I am a little tired sometimes, that is all. I am glad the house has fallen into such good hands; don't think for a moment, Marian, that I am nourishing a sense of wrong, because it is your home and not mine. Hard as my life is now, I am inclined to think I am better off than I should be if everything had gone smoothly with us, and we had not lost this place. Life means such different things to me now!"

Marian sat back in her chair, and gazed wistfully at her friend.

"I wonder at you, Julia!" she said. "You were brought up very much as I was, always petted and indulged; and yet you are not like me. I could never have met adversity as you have. You are so strong in mind and will, I mean; so patient and cheerful under it all. Julia, I envy you!"

"You forget," said Julia, "that I had a discipline which you had not. For years I was in my mother's place. That prepared me for what followed. What we most need, I have faith to believe, will be given us. Your lot is very different from mine, and you will not so much need the qualities you envy in me."

"Julia," Marian broke forth impulsively, "I need them now. You think everything is beautiful here. Well, everything is beautiful. I have all I wish, and more, far more. But I have a duty here, — oh, do let me tell you! — a duty which I have n't the strength to fulfil."

And Julia had the pain of seeing the beautiful and fortunate one give away to tears. She was deeply moved; and embracing her, she said, —

"Can I help you? Tell me all, if you wish to."

"I have n't told any one yet, not even my mother," replied Marian, after a pause, and with now and then a recurring sob. "You are the only person I can tell. Don't think I am unhappy. I have only one trouble — oh, if I had your courage and firmness to meet that!"

She then went on and gave an account of Clarence, and of Mr. Daskill's very great tenderness for him. Julia's countenance glistened.

"I shall think more of Mr. Daskill after this," she said. "Such an attachment, in a person of such pride, seems to me very noble."

"Oh, I think so!" said Marian. "It makes me love and admire him all the more. And it makes me despise *myself*, because I can't get over the repugnance I feel, and do for poor Clarence what a sister, what a mother should!"

"Who has the care of him?"

"His father is his physician, and his aunt, Mrs. Downey, has him specially in charge. She takes him out to walk or to ride occasionally, and scarcely leaves him, except when her

duties as housekeeper require it ; then Gaines, the gardener, stays with him. He doesn't lack for care ; but is n't it pitiful, Julia, that I can do nothing for him—that my agitation, when I see him, helps to bring on his attacks? He is much worse than he was, and I fear that I am partly the cause."

"His father does not blame you?" questioned Julia.

"Oh, no! And yet," said Marian, feeling that she must not tell her friend a downright untruth, "he is not *satisfied* with me, as he would be if I could do something for his son,—that is natural. Of course he sees my shortcomings, though not, perhaps as I see them. I hope not!"

Julia was considering what she should say to give her friend strength and comfort in her trying situation, when, of a sudden, Marian, with a look and a cry of horror, clapped both hands to her ears. The cause was no mystery to Julia. A sound, of which she would have taken no heed but for the revelation she had just heard, echoed through the hall. She knew that it was caused by the epileptic boy. He had, in fact, slipped away from Gaines in the garden, entered the house alone, and been taken with a fit almost at the drawing-room door.

When Adolphus came in a few minutes later, he found Marian by the staircase, wild with consternation, wringing her helpless hands, while she bent over somebody sitting on the hall floor. Rushing forward, he saw a pale and beautiful girl there, holding Clarence's head in her lap, and pitifully wiping the foam from his lips. He gave her a look of intense gratitude and admiration, said calmly, "You are very kind to us in our affliction!" and taking the form of the prostrate boy from her arms, bore him away.

Julia was near fainting when she reached the parlor and sank in a chair.

"Oh! is n't it terrible?" said Marian.

"It is terrible!" Julia answered in a subdued voice. "And it is something which you, Marian, ought not to undergo. You are not equal to it. It should not be expected of you. Don't blame yourself any more. Poor boy! Poor, dear Marian! Oh, how I pity you all!"

"*You* did what I never could do!" said Marian, with bitter envy, remembering the look Adolphus had given her friend.

"I have a little more nerve than you. I only thought, What can I do for him? I forgot everything else in the compassion I felt."

"O Julia, if I could do that! But I am such a miserable coward!"

Adolphus came into the room soon after, and was for the first time formally made acquainted with Ward Farnell's daughter. He thanked her again for her kind attention to Clarence, apologized for the pain which the scene must have cost her, and begged the privilege of driving her home. She declined the offer, saying she needed the walk, and presently took her leave, the eyes of Adolphus following her with such a look as he used to give Marian, but gave her now no more.

"I did n't know Ward Farnell had such a daughter!" he exclaimed, as he turned away from the window.

"You have seen her in the street, and I told you long ago how beautiful she was," said Marian, trying to put a cheerful face on her misery.

"Beautiful — yes!" said Adolphus, pacing the floor. "But she is a person of character. I am quite astonished. Why don't you cultivate her acquaintance?"

This was turning the arrow in Marian's heart. For a moment she was silent, choking with jealousy and a sense of wrong. Then she said, with a tinge of bitterness in her tones, —

"She has no time now to give to her old friends. I have told you all along how superior she is to me in everything; how much I prize her friendship, and how I miss it. You don't seem to remember a word I have said. One would think you had never heard of her before."

He seemed hardly to heed what she said now.

"That's the daughter Farnell built this house for," he resumed, going again to the window. "She deserved it. An uncommon girl! It might have made a difference in his fortunes, when we stripped him, if I had known!"

"It is a pity you had n't!" said Marian, in the anguish of her heart.

He made no reply, but returned to his son's chamber.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW MARIAN MADE CHOICE OF A COMPANION.

ADOLPHUS did not speak of Julia again very soon ; and Marian, I am sorry to say, was not eager to bring her too much admired friend into the house. She wanted peace ; she wanted love ; and we can hardly blame her if she shrank from exposing herself to unfavorable contrasts in his eyes. The poor child was getting to have a morbidly acute idea of her own insignificance.

But the husband's moods were not less frequent or less dark after this. One evening when he was in one of them, she detected his eyes fixed upon her with deep and sullen discontent. It was more than she could bear ; she did not offer to caress him, but flung herself down on her knees before him :—

“Oh, what have I done to displease you?” she said despairingly, as she looked up into his lowering face.

“It is nothing you have done,” he answered, with the slightest significance of stress on the last word.

“I know,” she exclaimed, “it is what I have not done, what I cannot do. Dear, dear Adolphus, do not hate me for that ; I told you in the beginning what a mere child—what a poor, weak, inefficient thing—I was. You promised not to expect too much of me ; do not now ! Do love me a little for what I am, as you said you would always, and forgive me for what I am not ! It kills me to see you so unhappy, and to know that I am the cause !”

Her face all tears and entreaty, her voice broken by sobs,

she knelt and implored him. He made no reply ; but unclasping her hands from his knees,—not roughly, but firmly and coldly,—got up. She covered her face with her hands, and bowed her head to the floor ; there he left her sobbing, and lighting a cigar, walked out of the house.

She did not dare follow and cling to him ; she could only wait, in the utmost wretchedness, for his mood to pass, and then once more, for a little while, be as happy as she might.

They had accepted an invitation to visit the old folks the next day ; Marian was to go down and spend the afternoon with her family, and Mr. Daskill was to come to tea. She was not in a fit state to meet the engagement ; but it had been made and she went.

She summoned her happiest smiles to meet her mother, and keep that dear good woman deceived. But somehow at a touch her brimming heart overflowed, and she sobbed out her woes on her maternal breast.

Mrs. Fenway was filled with a fury of grief and indignation ; and had Adolphus made his appearance at five o'clock when he was expected, there is no doubt but that she would have eased her burdened mind with regard to him, then and there.

But Mr. Daskill came late, for reasons ; and when he did come the family were waiting to sit down at supper, which had been delayed on his account ; so Mrs. Fenway bridled her tongue, and masked the malice of her soul in smiling civility, comforted with the reflection that what she had to say to that monster of cruelty and ingratitude would keep. If the snap of her eye was at the same time slightly vindictive, and her manner towards him perceptibly sardonic, the tea's delay, and her known infirmity of temper, were considered cause enough.

Then, if you will believe it, that monster of cruelty and ingratitude was in his most amiable mood. The reasons he gave for coming late were abundantly satisfactory (until differ-

ent ones were discovered); and he went on to praise the prospects of the new oil speculation in a manner truly enchanting; so that Mrs. Fenway half forgot her wrath, and whispered to Marian at parting, that she believed it would all come out right after all.

Mr. Daskill's good spirits did not forsake him when he reached home with his wife. He became more serious than he had been during the evening, but his voice and manner were very kind, as he sat down beside her, and spoke in this wise:

"Marian, I've been thinking a good deal about you to-day. Your position here has n't been just what it should be; and you have n't been so happy as I hoped to make you."

Her heart fluttered up to him like a dove, and she hastened to assure him, —

"Oh, yes, I have been quite happy much of the time: I have enjoyed so many things! I should have been entirely happy, if I could have felt that I made you so."

"Well, it is not your fault, nor altogether mine, perhaps," he replied, "that some shadows have come between us. What I want is, to make your position easier in future."

"O Adolphus, you are kind!" said Marian, hardly able to repress tears of gratitude and hope that sprang to her eyes.

"I mean to be," he said, in his large, generous way. "And I've been trying to devise a plan to make your winter pass pleasantly. I hope you will not be disappointed because we are not going to live in town. I can't very well be long away from my business here; and my expenses are so great, I thought best to let our town house for the season."

Marian protested that she preferred to be near her friends. "If only you are here too!" she said, leaning fondly on his shoulder, as of old.

"I shall be with you all I can. But I shall have business in various places, which will take me away a good deal. You need a companion in the house. I know that my aunt, though

a very worthy and competent person, is not one from whom you can get much sympathy ; her range of feeling and her sphere of activity are so remote from yours. Now, when I say a companion, I mean one who will be both a comfort and a help to you. What do you think ? ”

Surprised at the proposition, yet pleased that he should be so mindful of her, Marian replied that she thought the right kind of a companion would be very desirable.

“ I am glad the idea strikes you favorably,” said Adolphus. “ Think of it, and let me know if there is any person you prefer.”

“ Have you any in your mind ? ” Marian inquired, anxious to please him in all things.

“ It is n’t for me to choose your companion,” he said, with a smile.

“ But, dearest, the first consideration with me is, that she must be a person you will like.”

“ I am sure to like any one you would choose. There is no need of deciding hastily. Take time to consider it, — unless you happen to think of somebody at once.”

“ There’s Nancy Seymour,” said Marian. “ A very pretty girl. She told me she would like to board somewhere near the seminary and go to school this winter.”

“ A boarder ? That would n’t do at all. And I wouldn’t take a school-girl. What you want is a woman of more years and experience than yourself. A lady in her manners, and yet one who can help you about your sewing.”

Marian thought again.

“ There’s Miss Norcross. You saw her at my mother’s some time ago. She says her health will not allow her to teach school much longer, and she and I always liked each other.”

“ That everlasting talker ? ” said Adolphus, with a laugh. “ You’d soon tire of hearing her tongue run, at least I should.”

No; what you want for every-day wear is a more quiet person, — one who is *not* a great talker."

Marian was beginning to think her choice in this matter would turn out, as it usually did in others, to be, after all, his choice. He went on, —

"And there 's another thing to be considered, — our peculiar circumstances here. A woman of a little different temperament from yours might do so much for Clarence! But she must be a person of steady nerves."

The appalling thought occurred to Marian that Julia Farnell was secretly in her husband's mind. All her jealousy was roused.

"If he means her," thought she, "he shall say so; I will not mention her name. Then he shall have the pleasure of knowing that she cannot be had on any terms. Leave her father and sisters to come here? He does n't know her as I do."

She remained silent; but seeing that he rather insisted on continuing the subject, she at last ventured another suggestion, knowing well that he would reject it, and, indeed, hoping that he would.

"I can't think of anybody else, unless it is Miss Clewsey. She says she has got tired of dress-making, and she would be glad to come, I am sure."

"Miss Clewsey?" said Adolphus. "I remember the name; but somehow I've got her mixed up with Mrs. Thackers and — what is the other woman's name who sewed for you? Lottie's friend."

"Mrs. Chilgrove," said Marian.

"Oh, yes; Mrs. Chilgrove. Miss Clewsey was the stupid one, I believe."

"She is n't stupid; though I can't say she is particularly bright."

"A good needle-woman, I think you said," rejoined Adol-

phus, as if inclined to consider the matter favorably. "That's one very desirable qualification. But you ought to have an intelligent person,—one capable of saying a bright thing, now and then, to let us know she is alive."

"When you come to very fine needle-work, she is n't the equal of—there!" suddenly exclaimed Marian. "Why did n't I think of her before? Mrs. Chilgrove! She is quiet, she is bright, she is thirty, a lady in her manners, and a person of calm nerves and self-control; she fulfils all the requirements."

"She is the woman with the short hair?" queried Adolphus.

"No, that is Mrs. Thackers. It was Mrs. Chilgrove who said she admired your taste in silk and shoulders."

"Oh, yes! I remember," laughed Adolphus. "I thought that rather bright. I walked home with her and the Lorkinses, and she paid you some very pretty compliments. Mrs. Chilgrove,—I must n't forget that name again."

"Is there any objection to her?" said Marian.

"Why, no,—not if you like her. But can you get her? Is n't she a fixture of Lottie's? I would n't try to take her away from your sister," said Adolphus, rather discouragingly.

Marian was so delighted to think she might have been mistaken as to his preferring Julia Farnell, that she became enthusiastic over her new discovery.

"Lottie has really no room for her," she said, "and will be glad to have her find a good place somewhere else."

"If that is so, I shall make no objection; but I advise you, before engaging her, to inquire very particularly about her of Lottie. Perhaps, after all, you will think of somebody you like better."

Adolphus spoke very disinterestedly, and Marian rejoiced to think that she was really to have her choice in an important matter, for once.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MRS. CHILGROVE IS TAKEN INTO CONFIDENCE.

THE next day Marian went to carry the pleasant news to her mother. Not finding her at home, she questioned black Nance about her. Nance giggled, hung her head, and finally explained.

"She put on her bunnet about an hour ago, and went off out the back door. I s'pose she was going to the woods to cut some licks."

"What for?" said Marian.

"To lick me with," the girl replied, with a crafty look and a defiant titter. "I been watching for her, ready to run. She's been gone so long now I guess she's got over her mad fit. Mabbe she did n't go for the licks."

"What was she angry at?"

"I d'n' know! sumpting happened last night. But I wa'n't to blame if Mr. Daskill did come late to tea."

"That was nothing," said Marian. "Mother didn't mind anything about it, after she heard his explanation."

"Guess you would n't say that, Miss, if you'd seen the shakin'-up she give me when I told her! Did n't I ketch it!"

"Told her what?"

"How I got wet bringing home the cows, and how I seen—O Lordy Massy!" suddenly exclaimed Nance, dodging out of danger, "there she is now!"

Mrs. Fenway came in by the back way, without the "licks," but looking marvellously red and excited. She had, in fact, been all the morning engaged in an arduous investigation of the true cause of Mr. Daskill's coming late to tea; and had

been much inflamed, both in body and mind, by the exercise involved and the discoveries made. At sight of Marian, however, she smoothed her ruffled features, sat down fanning herself, and with hard, forced smiles heard the news.

"And, only think!" Marian added, anxious to counteract the effect of her indiscreet confession of yesterday, "he has left the choice entirely to me. Is n't he kind? He said this morning I had better consult you about it; what you and I agree to will satisfy him. He is very desirous to make me happy, and I am happy already. I *think* he had somebody else in his mind, but he would n't say so, and he made no serious objection when I named Mrs. Chilgrove."

"Mrs. Chilgrove! Well! *you* may get along with her, though I could n't," said Mrs. Fenway. "I hope the man's in earnest, and won't back out as soon as you've really made a choice."

"I don't think he will," replied Marian. "All he requires is that Lottie should give her a good recommendation, since we know so little about her."

"That she will do, fast enough. Nance!" cried Mrs. Fenway. Nance peeped in timidly. "Run right down and tell Lottie, Marian and I want to see her about something very important."

Nance went and Lottie came. Mrs. Fenway, in the meanwhile, had time to cool a little, and to reflect that here might be an opportunity to solve a certain mystery, and perhaps end Marian's troubles.

Lottie expressed some surprise at Marian's choice; wondering why she had not preferred a person of her own age and tastes.

"I thought of that," said Marian; "but I need some one of more years and experience."

"Well," said Lottie, "I have n't a word to say against Mrs. Chilgrove. She is kind-hearted; minds her own business;

and, I must add, keeps her own counsel. *I* have never yet been able to get very deep in her confidence; but perhaps you can. There's a pretty large chamber which she keeps shut."

"Every person has such a chamber, large or small, I suppose," said Mrs. Fenway, reflecting what a dark one she was at the moment keeping carefully locked from her own daughters.

Marian sighed; she was young to be having her dismal secret chamber too. Her mother went on, —

"If she can keep her own counsel — that's one merit. I hate a blabber. Of course she will jump at the chance."

"I don't know," said Lottie. "She has very strange and positive notions about some things; and I may as well tell you that she does n't like Mr. Daskill."

Marian looked alarmed; but her mother hastened to say, —

"All the better. You don't want a companion that will like your husband, or that your husband will like, too well."

No, Marian confessed to herself that she did n't. But what reason had Lottie for her opinion?

"Oh, she shows that she does n't fancy him; and she has said as much. Two or three times, when we've been in the store together, I've noticed that she has avoided speaking to him. To tell the honest truth," added Lottie bluntly, "she thinks he did n't behave very honorably in getting you away from Will Rayburn."

Marian blushed violently.

"Perhaps you won't want her after that," said Lottie.

But Marian could not have it in her heart to blame Mrs. Chilgrove for feeling so.

"How about her temper?" Mrs. Fenway inquired. "That's an important point in a person you are going to live with." None of the good lady's friends would have disputed that.

She went on, not noticing Lottie's peculiar smile: "She snapped *me* up so short once she fairly took my breath away; but I suppose I was mostly to blame."

"Marian will have no trouble with her on that account; I never had any," said Lottie.

"Then suppose we send for her at once. Nance, go down and stay with the baby, and tell Mrs. Chilgrove we'll be ever so much obliged to her if she will step up here a minute."

Mrs. Fenway felt already that she was going to be on very friendly terms with her daughter's future companion. She received her with great cordiality, and presented the matter to her in its most favorable aspect. Mrs. Chilgrove listened with surprise, reflected gravely, asked a few pertinent questions with regard to the position she would be expected to fill, then held out her hand to Marian with a smile, and frankly accepted the proposal. The little business ended, Lottie ran home to her baby, and Marian hastened to carry the gratifying news to Adolphus at the store.

"Wait a minute, — will you be so good, Mrs. Chilgrove?" said Mrs. Fenway, as the lady was going too. "Now that you are to be my daughter's companion, I would like to have a little friendly talk with you."

Long as Mrs. Chilgrove had been the companion of another daughter, she had never before been so honored by Mrs. Fenway. There was just a shade of some such thought in her mild reply.

"I have for a long time wished to become better acquainted with Lottie's mother."

"That is very kind!" said Mrs. Fenway. "Dear Mrs. Chilgrove, my heart goes out to you in a strange manner. The more I think of it, the more plainly I see that you are the most suitable person my daughter could have chosen."

"I shall hope to deserve your good opinion," said the modest Mrs. Chilgrove.

It was gusty weather with Mrs. Fenway. She sighed, and wiped her eyes.

"You can do so much for my dear Marian,—more than you think, more than she dreams, poor girl! O Mrs. Chilgrove, I think I can trust you!"

There was another gust. Mrs. Chilgrove kept her softly scintillant, greenish-gray eyes on the weeping woman, wondering what was to come.

"Say! *can* I trust you?"

Mrs. Fenway looked up appealingly. Mrs. Chilgrove dropped her eyes innocently, and smiled like an angel.

"Implicitly, my dear Mrs. Fenway!"

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Chilgrove! I have a great burden on my mind. No one knows it, not one of my own family suspects; not even Marian, though it is all on her account. It has seemed as if I should die, if I could n't tell somebody!"

"I know what it is to need a friend to confide in," said Mrs. Chilgrove gently. "You can confide in me."

"Whether you can help me or not," Mrs. Fenway proceeded, "I feel sure you will not betray my secret. You are not a blabbing woman; we have found that out. Now, you must n't let me prejudice you against anybody, in what I am going to say. I understand, to begin with, that you don't like my son-in-law very well."

"Mr. Lorkins? I've a very hearty liking for Mr. Lorkins," said Mrs. Chilgrove.

"I mean Mr. Daskill."

"I have n't seen enough of Mr. Daskill to know whether I like him or not. The two or three times we have happened to meet, he has been very polite to me."

"Yes, he's a polite man. And, certainly, a remarkable man in some respects. And a good man, Mrs. Chilgrove, I don't know but he is a very good man. But there's one thing that distresses me,—a perfect mystery as yet, which

you may help me clear up. It concerns my dear Marian. I'm afraid—I'm afraid, Mrs. Chilgrove," Mrs. Fenway added, in great agitation, "I have reason to believe—he isn't true to her."

"You surprise me!" said Mrs. Chilgrove, one of her rare, faint flushes stealing over her naturally pale features.

"Perhaps I state it too strongly. I hope so. But a mother's fears, you know! And one thing I am sure of,"—Mrs. Fenway lowered her voice, and fixed her tearful, excited eyes on her companion,—"he meets a strange woman in secret places!"

"You amaze me!" murmured Mrs. Chilgrove; and passed a cool hand over her face.

"There may be nothing very wrong about it, but it has a bad look. The fact that he keeps it such a dreadful mystery is against him. Oh, it would kill my dear Marian if she should find it out!"

"Who is the woman?" Mrs. Chilgrove calmly inquired.

"That I don't know, more than the man in the moon. She comes like a ghost rising out of the ground, and vanishes as mysteriously. I've made diligent inquiries, and I can't put my finger on her anywhere. I think she comes from a distance and meets him by appointment. If she was any one living in town, I think I might trace her out; don't you?"

"It would certainly seem so."

"Now, you, Mrs. Chilgrove, — it has occurred to me, — are just the person to help me find out about her."

"I?" said Mrs. Chilgrove.

"No one else!" Mrs. Fenway declared, very positively. "It is easy for him to deceive my dear Marian; she, poor thing, suspects nothing. But he can't make many pretences of business, and then go out and meet that creature, almost under your eyes, without your knowing something of it, now that I have put you on your guard."

"I am very glad you have put me on my guard," said Mrs. Chilgrove. She considered a moment, then added, "I am not sure that it will be right for me to accept a situation in his house, under such circumstances. Excuse me, Mrs. Fenway; but I must have some regard for my own reputation."

"True; and I would n't have you compromise that in any way. And you will not. It is not a matter of public scandal I speak of, and I hope it won't be. I only ask that you will keep watch over my dear Marian's happiness, and assist me in a good work,—that of solving a mystery which is almost driving me distracted."

Mrs. Chilgrove smoothed the ruffled plumes of her alarmed innocence, and inquired, —

"What do you know of this woman? What reason have you to suspect him of meeting her?"

"Suspect him!" echoed Mrs. Fenway. "Have n't I seen them together with my own eyes?"

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Chilgrove. "Then you would know her if you were to see her again?"

"No," said Mrs. Fenway. "That's the trouble. It was in the dark, as it were. You remember, when you were sewing at our house, before Marian was married, I went out one evening to buy some braid. I went farther, and paid Marian's tuition at the seminary. I had taken her key, and just out of curiosity I looked into the new house on my way back. Now I would n't have him know it for the world; for he has n't the least idea I ever saw the inside of that house till he took me and Marian up there the next day."

Mrs. Chilgrove listened intently, her features quite pale again. Mrs. Fenway looked carefully at the doors, then drew her chair close to the visitor's, and proceeded in a whisper.

"While I was there,—it was just about dark,—in came

Mr. Daskill with a lady, and talked with her a long while in the conservatory, while I was hid in the entry, about as frightened and bewildered a creature as you or anybody ever saw. I could n't overhear much that was said; only she talked of exposing him for some wickedness in the past, and he seemed trying to conciliate her." Mrs. Fenway did not think it necessary to enter particularly into all she overheard. "Then they went up-stairs, — brushed right past me by the parlor door, so near I could have grabbed her, and I've sometimes wished I had. I did come within one of seeing her, when he lit a match on the upper landing; but she had just stepped around the banisters, and I missed the chance. A narrow escape for her, was n't it?"

"Very narrow," said the tranquil listener.

"Well, that is the only time I ever saw her, and I was beginning to hope the intrigue or trouble, whatever it might be, was all over. But, will you believe it? only yesterday afternoon he met that creature again."

"Is it possible?"

"I've no doubt of it. Marian was here, and I had invited Mr. Daskill to tea. Well, we waited and waited, and he did n't come; till finally, after we had got out of all manner of patience, in he walks, gay as a bluebird, and tells the most plausible story you ever heard about having been over to look at Mr. Thumwell's wool. Then he talked of other things, and I forgot all about his explanation, till this morning I noticed that Nance's dress was badly torn, and called her to an account. She did n't know anything about it at first, but I shook up her memory, and then she told me a story which I could n't help laughing at till she came to the important part of it, which was the true explanation of Mr. Daskill's coming late to tea.

"You see," continued Mrs. Fenway, "we keep our cows this season over in the back pasture, and last night, Frank

being away, I sent Nance to fetch 'em. She can be as smart as any girl you ever saw, when she takes a notion; but she's full of her pranks, and last evening she took it into her head she would ride home. There was nothing else to ride but one of the cows; so she singled out old Brin, coaxed her up to a stone heap with a nubbin of corn, and mounted her, boy-fashion, bare-back. Old Brin wears the bell, and I suppose Nance thought, if she couldn't manage to drive the other cattle, they would follow. But things didn't work just as she expected. Old Brin never had anybody on her back before, and didn't know what to make of it. Off she started, but instead of coming to the bars which Nance had let down, she made for the woods, where the cows rush through the bushes in fly-time to brush off the insects. Maybe she thought she had a wonderfully big fly on her back. I can see them now" (Mrs. Fenway had to smile at the picture which came vividly to her mind), "Nance giggling, and holding on with hands and heels, old cow cantering, cow-bell rattling, then the plunge into the brush. But Nance is nimble as a monkey, and she managed to stick on, through thick and thin, till they came to the creek. There were more thickets on the other side; she had been scratched and bruised enough for once, and as there was no stopping old Brin, she concluded she had better tumble off. She tumbled off at the wrong time, and went head over heels, casplash, into the water."

Mrs. Fenway was serious again, as she continued, —

"When she got out and crawled up the bank, she looked for the cow, and saw no cow at all, but two persons near a log, where I suppose they had been sitting when the sound of the cow-bell, the rush through the bushes, and the splash in the water interrupted their confab. I have no doubt of their being the very same persons I saw that night in the new house. One was Mr. Daskill, at any rate. The other was a woman;

but she immediately slipped out of sight in the thicket. A mighty cosey place it was for their meeting, so out of the way I don't suppose any one goes there from one year's end to another, unless bent on some mischief, or carried in spite of them by a runaway cow. Nance was wet as she could be, and I guess a good deal frightened as well as hurt. Besides, it was growing dark in the woods by that time. She had only a glimpse of the woman, and could n't even tell what sort of a dress she had on; only she thinks it was a dark-colored one. But dark dresses are very common. I wear one; so do you."

"They are very common," assented Mrs. Chilgrove.

"But woman there was, she is sure, though Mr. Daskill tried to lie her out of it. He walked right up to her, and asked how she came there, — mighty stern with her at first.

"‘I rode the cow,’ says she; ‘and I’ve got to find that cow now!’

"‘She ran in among these young pines,’ says he. ‘You saw her yourself, did n't you?’

"‘I did n't see no cow; I seen a woman,’ says Nance.

"‘A woman? You did n't see any woman!’ says he. ‘Who did you think it was?’

"‘I could n't make out,’ says she; ‘but ’t was a woman, anyhow.’

"‘What!’ says he, so sharp she was beginning to think she had better be convinced, ‘you think I don't know, when I was walking along here by the brook and saw it all? Be careful how you contradict a gentleman. You had been hurt by your tumble,’ says he. ‘You must have hit your head against a stone. There! don't cry about it!’ and he began to coax her. ‘I'm not scolding you; only I want you to learn to stick to the truth. Do you really think you saw a woman?’

"‘No,’ says Nance, ‘I guess it must have been the cow.’

"‘That's right; you're a sensible girl,’ says he; ‘and here's some money for you to buy candy with. Don't be so foolish

again as to fancy you saw a woman, and I'll give you some more some time.'

"'But old Brin must have gone t'other way; I hear the bell way down the creek,' says Nance.

"'She went through the thicket, and then started for home,' says he. 'Come, I'll go along with you, — I'm on my way to Mr. Fenway's. We won't say anything about your riding the cow, or fancying you saw a woman when your head was dizzy.'

"Nance would have been glad enough not to mention the ride on old Brin; and would have bought her candy, and held her tongue, and perhaps imagined after all she did n't see a woman, if I had n't noticed her torn clothes. She kept so shy of me last night I did n't know she came home wet; but this morning I caught her, and drew one thing and another out of her, till we got to Mr. Daskill and the woman. I was dreadfully excited, as you may believe, but I made her think all I wanted to know was why Mr. Daskill came late to tea. Then as soon as I got everything out of her I could, I put on my bonnet, and went straight over across lots to Mr. Thumwell's, made an errand to ask about Mrs. Thumwell's new patent egg-beater before I bought one, and managed in the course of conversation to ask if they had sold their wool.

"'No,' says she, 'he can't find anybody to pay him his price yet.'

"'I hear Mr. Daskill has been here to look at it,' says I.

"'You're mistaken about that,' says she. 'Mr. Daskill, has never been near it, though he has promised to come. It's stored in the garret, and as nice a lot it is as ever you saw.' She invited me to step up and look at it; but I did n't take much interest after that, — only in the wool he had been trying to pull over my eyes! Now, if you were in my place, would you have any doubt about there having been a woman with him there in the woods?"

"None whatever, Mrs. Fenway."

"And don't you think it very, very extraordinary?"

"It is, indeed," said Mrs. Chilgrove. "The more so, because one cannot conceive of a man, just married to a beautiful girl like your daughter, being drawn away from her by any woman whatever."

"I don't really suppose he cares for anybody else. It is probably some evil power this creature has over him. Oh!" said Mrs. Fenway, "should n't you think she would have some pity on a poor, innocent child like Marian, whatever may be her feeling with regard to him?"

"If she only knew your daughter, I am sure she would."

"It is making *him* unhappy. He is very gloomy at times. Marian thinks it is on account of his son, but I believe this horrid mystery is at the bottom of it. Now, since you are to be in the family, you can't help seeing much that is going on. So I have thought it best to tell you something, and secure your aid and sympathy, — a mother so, I am anxious for my daughter's happiness!"

"I enter into your feelings fully," said Mrs. Chilgrove, "and I thank you for your confidence. It will save me so much! I shall now know just what to do. You may rest assured that I will not let anything pass unnoticed which may concern Mrs. Daskill's happiness, or which I think her mother ought to know."

After this pretty little speech, and some mutual protestations of faithful friendship, these two amiable creatures kissed each other and parted.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FORTUNES OF BUBBLING RUN.

THE day before the Carolus note fell due, Adolphus called on Mr. Fenway at the fork factory, and said to him in his large, liberal, open way, —

“Are you going to want that money to-morrow?”

“I shall want it if Mr. Carolus does,” replied Mr. Fenway.

“I can pay it now if you like,” said Adolphus, “or I can find use for it awhile longer. I am buying more wheat just now than at any time during the season; farmers who have been holding back for higher prices are rushing in their grain, and I pay cash for every bushel.”

“Well, if Carolus don’t trouble me, I won’t trouble you,” said Miles.

And there the matter rested. Carolus was in no haste to collect a debt of the thriving fork-maker; and Mr. Fenway felt easy in his mind on the subject, believing that his son-in-law’s business was flourishing.

The oil speculation, too, promised well. A company had been organized, officers elected, and the stocks put upon the market. President, Hon. Josiah Gookin, M. C.,—a sounding name, to give respectability to the enterprise. Vice-president, Miles Fenway, — a selection equally well calculated to inspire stock-buyers with confidence. Secretary and treasurer, A. Daskill. Superintendent, Marshall Narabone, — Daskill’s uncle, and getter-up of the company. These and two other gentlemen were directors; capital stock, \$125,000; 1,250 shares, \$100 each.

Miles remonstrated with his son-in-law against the use of his name.

"Why," said he, "I am not even a stockholder."

"Don't be so sure of that," replied Adolphus. "There's stock credited to you, as I promised you there should be. If you don't choose to keep it, I know of somebody who'll be glad at any time to take it off your hands."

"But I can't attend the directors' meetings, or give any other time to the business."

"You need n't. But you must let your name stand. I told you here was a chance to make a fortune with your hands in your pockets,—you remember? Well, we have already sold nearly stock enough to pay for the entire property, which is better than I predicted. You will not be called upon for a dollar to make the final payments; and you can be known as an officer of the company with even less trouble to yourself."

And now came out a neat little pamphlet, describing the property and setting forth the advantages of investing money in the stocks of the Bubbling Run Oil Company, copies of which were freely distributed in Waybrook. It was read in every house, and talked of wherever two or three citizens were gathered together. Its statements, which had all the dazzling splendors of romance, were fully confirmed by matter-of-fact Deacon Tibbetts and Mr. Solomon Tompkins, who, taken out by Mr. Daskill to visit the scene of operations, had been munificently entertained (and privately favored in the acquisition of stock), and had come home full of contagious enthusiasm.

Mrs. Fenway was once more well pleased with her son-in-law; hearing not only these good things about the Bubbling Run business, but also favorable reports (from her friend, Mrs. Chilgrove, now in the family) regarding his private and domestic affairs.

"Now, Mr. Fenway," she said triumphantly, "I hope you will give a little more heed to my advice after this!" And she insisted that he was and should be not only a stockholder, but an officer of the company.

"Of course he will let his name stand!" she said to Mr. Daskill.

And easy-natured Miles, tired of her importunity, had at last said, "Well, I don't know that it will do me any harm," never suspecting that it might harm anybody else.

Mrs. Fenway had told privately a good many people that her husband was very largely interested in the Bubbling Run, which assurance, taken together with the prominence of his name, first led many to think of investing in the company's stock. The shares, which had been selling as low as fifty dollars to first purchasers, soon rose to fifty-five,—a circumstance which greatly increased the excitement.

"They 'll be at par in four months," Mr. Daskill confidently declared; and in a few days announced that no more could be sold for less than sixty.

"What ye think now, mammy?" said little Wetherspun, hurrying home with the news.

Mrs. Wetherspun, who was about setting the dinner-table, shoved what she thought by dropping down in a chair, with a look of dismay.

"Deacon brags he's made two hundred dollars without turning his hand over."

"How so? fer land's sake!"

"Bought twenty shares at fifty; can sell to-day for sixty," said the cheerful Wetherspun, tipping back in his chair, with his feet on the round.

"I want to know now if that's so!" Mrs. Wetherspun exclaimed, with her most dreadful scowl, as if she had suffered a personal injury from the rise of stocks in which she was not interested.

"Showed me his sheers; printed on handsome paper, I tell ye! with a pictur' of a derrick and a steam-engine. Made my mouth water!"

"Deacon's one o' them kind that's alluz forever blunderin' into some sich luck," said Mrs. Wetherspun, disdainfully. "I can remember when the family did n't own a brass kittle. Two hundred!"

And she expressed her dissatisfaction by the manner in which she proceeded to set the little square pine table, where it stood against the wall, putting on two ancient blue-edged plates, two ancient blue-edged cups and saucers, two knives and two forks (everything went in pairs in the ark of that prudent couple's housekeeping) in a rattling and lively fashion.

"You should hear Ward Farnell talk about it!" said her husband. "He was going into this very thing, only Daskill and Fenway got the start of him; he knew there was fortunes to be made out on 't. He sets round in the store and bar-room, and brags about it all day."

"He 'd better be 'arnin' somethin' to pay his honest debts with," said Mrs. Wetherspun, spitefully. "Two huudred! If it don't beat everything! Why could n't we?"

"Nothin' resk, nothin' have; and you was opposed to our runnin' any resk."

"Why, no! Jest as soon as I see Mr. Fenway's name on as vice-president, I made up my mind; for he's a man everybody respects, whatever they may think of Mis' Fenway. *He* would n't be in the ile 'thout 'twas a good thing. But you're so plaguy cautious! ye know ye be."

"Cautious?" repeated little Wetherspun. "I mos' gener'ly look 'fore I leap, I allow. But I never heerd ye say afore you thought I was any too cautious; an' ye would n't now, if our neighbors had n't happened to be in luck and we not. If I'd ben for buyin', and we'd lost a cent, then I'd

a ben the carelessst man in the world. I did say, if I was sure the sheers 'u'd go up, I'd pitch in; but you said, 'Time enough! time enough!' Then they went up five, and you was sorry enough we had n't bought at fifty. But you would n't buy then, anyway, you said, and lose five. Now they 're sixty."

"Ye need n't fling that in my face ag'in!" said Mrs. Wetherspun, putting the pork and potatoes on the table. "Come! le's eat."

Chipper little Wetherspun drew up his chair, said grace in a low, quick tone, and then raised his voice, as he lifted his face from his plate, —

"Bob Syles bought five sheers at fifty-five, and now he 's crowin' all over town about how he 's made twenty-five dollars easier 'n tradin' hosses."

"That wuthless Bob Syles! But money won't do *him* no good," said Mrs. Wetherspun, as if there was comfort in that reflection.

"Deacon 's goin' to buy more; says sheers 'll be at seventy or seventy-five in a week."

Mrs. Wetherspun held the little black earthen teapot over a cup, forgetting to pour the tea.

"Did he say that? Now, why don't ye go right over and talk with Mr. Fenway?"

"I 've tried that; but ye might as well try to git blood out of a whetstun; says he don' know no more 'bout Bubbling Run 'n I do."

"That 's jest like Miles Fenway! so non-committal. I wish I was n't mad with Mis' Fenway; I'd go an' talk with her. But I hain't forgot them pair o' stockin's an' the way she treated me yit."

"I would n't bite off my nose to spite my face," said Wetherspun. "You jest go over and say *Bubblin' Run* to her, if ye want to make her good-natered. Wintergreen gals say she 's full on't. They talk of buyin' in, — 'd I tell ye?"

"No! land's sake! why, everybody's buyin'!" Mrs. Wetherspun exclaimed, in perfect consternation. "I'll go right over and see 'em this very arternoon!"

The dinner eaten and the dishes washed, Mrs. Wetherspun went accordingly, and astonished her husband by returning in much less time than ever before, to his knowledge, from the house of a neighbor at all inclined to be sociable.

"Wull, what—wha' d' ye make out, mammy?" said he, starting up from a nap, and rubbing his little black eyes open.

"Them Wintergreen gals," she replied breathlessly, "they've been an' gone an' bought 'em a sheer apiece! and they're jest as chirk over it as they can be. They was surprised as could be, when I told 'em we had n't bought. Mis' Fenway was down to see Lottie, an' they had her in to talk with me; an' she doos tell the greatest story! She says it's only an accommodation to Mr. Daskill's friends 't any sheers are sold now less 'n par; an' she doubts if any more can be had now for sixty, but she 'll see him an' inquire. If they should go up I should feel so worked!"

"Without we buy fust; then I guess neither on us would n't object to their goin' up," chuckled Wetherspun.

"I never was so up a stump in all my life!" said his wife.

"There's that four hundred in the bank," he suggested.

"But, daddy, ye would n't think o' puttin' in so much as that!" said she, sure to hold back as he advanced.

"I hain't said I thought o' puttin' any in," he replied, unwilling to assume the responsibility.

"If you hain't, who has?" she retorted, equally unwilling to forfeit her privilege of casting all blame on him in the future, in case they should make an unfortunate investment.

Mrs. Fenway came in at this juncture to say,—No, thank ye, she would n't take a chair, she was in a great hurry,—

merely to say (sitting down, nevertheless) that she had run into the store to speak with Mr. Daskill, who said news had just came that decided him not to sell any more short of sixty-five.

The Wetherspuns exchanged looks of dismay.

"Jest as my husband had made up his mind to buy! It's jest our luck, Mis' Fenway!"

"But he said, if *I* had any particular friends that had been preparing to purchase, expecting to get their stocks low, and if 't was any favor to *me*, he'd see that they should n't be disappointed. I spoke of you; and I said it *would* be a very great favor to me, — for you are *very* particular friends of mine, — if you could have as good a chance as anybody. Now, between you and me and the side of the house, — you are not to let anybody know it for the world, — he says if you'll decide at once how many shares you want, you shall have 'em at first cost, which is fifty dollars a share."

"I'm beat if I expected that!" said little Wetherspun, winking delightedly.

"I'm sure you're very kind!" added Mrs. Wetherspun; saying, in her heart, "I didn't quite throw them stockin's away, arter all."

"You must let Mr. Daskill know this afternoon. And remember!" said Mrs. Fenway, "you are not to tell a living soul what you pay."

"Wull, then, I s'pose I won't," said Wetherspun. "But it does seem too good to keep, if we 're buyin' as low as any on 'em; an' I shall be tempted to grin, when I hear the deacon makin' his brags."

"Ye better see to gittin yer chickens, 'fore ye spend much time crowin' over 'em," said Mrs. Wetherspun. "And take yer bank-book along; and be quick, or the bank'll be closed."

Exit Wetherspun, clutching the bank-book, with his hat on the back of his head.

"Mr. Carolus came in to collect his rent of the old maids just after you left," said Mrs. Fenway.

"Oh! did he?" replied Mrs. Wetherspun absently, her heart having gone with her husband and the bank-book.

"Yes. And ain't he a strange man? He says he don't think much of the Bubbling Run speculation."

"Doos he!" Mrs. Wetherspun's heart came back to her bosom with an anxious thump. "Why not?"

"'All a humbug,—all an infernal hum!' says he. 'Never knowed so much noise made about a thing that was n't a hum. You're wise virgins, wise virgins,' says he, in his horrible sarcastic way to the old maids. 'Thought you'd have ile in your lamps, did ye? Guess ye will, when *your* bridegroom comes, hi, hi, hi!' And he laughed till I thought his old bones would shake to pieces. Positively blasphemous, was n't it?"

"It was," said Mrs. Wetherspun absently again, her heart having gone once more in full chase, and in great alarm this time, after the bank-book.

"For my part," Mrs. Fenway proceeded, "I am surprised to find the old man knows so much Scripture. To hear him talk of the Bible! 'Twas a good book in its day, no doubt, a good book in its day. But that was a long while ago. You want to know what the real, modern Bible is? It's the ledger, it's the ledger,' says he.

"'Why, Mr. Carolus,' says I, 'how do you make that out?'"

"'By their fruits ye shall know them,' says he. 'That's in your Scriptur', ain't it? and very good Scriptur' it is. Now, people pretend to live by the Bible,—pretend,' says he. 'They put it in handsome bindings, and carry it to meeting, and read it for prayers, and pay it a compliment, whenever they speak on't: "The Bible!" they say, drawing down their faces and looking solemn. But what do they care for it?' says he. 'Do they do as they'd be done by? Love

their neighbors as themselves? Love their neighbors mighty well, some of 'em would, in that case! When they get a slap on one cheek, do they turn t'other? Do you, Mrs. Fenway?' says he; and I was obliged to own I was n't in the habit of doing it very often. 'No, nor nobody ain't in the habit on 't,' says he. 'So much for living by the Bible, Mrs. Fenway. Now for living by the ledger. Bible's a dead book; ledger's a live book. A man's heart's in his business, in his accounts, in making all the money he can, in all sorts of ways. Look at this man, and that man.' He named over about a dozen of our prominent church-members; and I had to confess every one of 'em seemed to be pursuing their worldly interest a good deal more earnestly than they did their heavenly, and to think enough sight more of it than of their neighbor's interest, any way. 'The law and the prophets they believe in,' says he, 'is the law on their side, and the profits too, in all business transactions. They don't care a tinker's dam, not one of 'em, for the law of Moses, or the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hezekiah, and your other *iahs*. By their fruits ye shall know them, Mrs. Fenway,' says he. And though it was perfectly shocking, I must confess it set me thinking, and I remarked to myself, 'We might many of us take warning from this man, when we see him living out openly and boastfully the selfish principles we are too apt to live secretly, often deceiving ourselves.' Which was certainly an edifying sentiment, coming from Mrs. Fenway on this particular occasion. "Don't you think so, Sister Wetherspun?" And Sister Fenway put on her most decorous prayer-meeting look.

"I don't know but it is—about the—you was talkin' about the ile," said Sister Wetherspun, having heard scarcely a word since her visitor branched off from that theme,—a fact which might have taught old Carolus where *her* heart was. "What else did he say?"

"He had it over, 'Wise virgins! throw your money away on a humbug, and then complain of my raising your rent!' But we all know Mr. Carolus!" said Mrs. Fenway.

"Did he say *throw away their money?*" asked Mrs. Wetherspun, turning pale.

"What! you ain't frightened at anything *he* said, are you? The idea!"

"I should think a good deal of his opinion in a business matter."

"I should n't. Did n't he always maintain that my husband would fail in the fork factory?"

"Wal, he did make a mistake there. But what did he say agin' the Bubblin' Run?"

"Oh, that it's all fine to start with, but soon we shall begin to be assessed for the expenses of boring, and have to keep paying out money or lose our stock, and the shares that went up like a rocket will come down like a stick!"

"My! how you talk! Do you mean to say —"

"No, *I* don't; but that's what he said—so absurd! We are raising capital enough now to meet all expenses," added Mrs. Fenway, with a swell of importance on the little pronoun which identified her with the B. R. O. Co.'s speculation.

"But did n't he think we was ever goin' to strike ile?" Sister W. had caught the pronoun.

"He? Did ye ever know Mr. Carolus to believe in anything he could n't clutch in his two hands? He acknowledged fortunes had been made in oil; 'but it's all chance, all chance, Mrs. Fenway!' says he, and knocked his stick down on the old maids' floor hard enough to wake a dozen babies in the next room. But don't ye be worried. With good flowing wells alongside of us, we are *warm*, we are decidedly *warm*, as the children say. We are on the great bed of that peculiar kind of sand rock where the oil is always found. Then there's the bubbling on the banks of the stream—sure

indications," added Mrs. Fenway pompously, "that we abound in gas and petroleum."

She offered Mrs. Wetherspun a pinch of snuff, and, taking a vigorous little pinch herself, exclaimed, "Mr. Carolus, indeed! the idea!" and departed.

Then, as soon as she was gone, Mrs. Wetherspun began to think over what Mr. Carolus had said, and to forget what Mrs. Fenway had said to confute him; growing all the while more and more alarmed about the bank-book, until at length she saw her little man coming with it in his hand, and with his hat still on the back of his head.

"Wal!" she said expectantly, letting him into the house. The sparkle of the little black eyes told his story. "Ye hain't been and bought, have ye? I'd no idee ye was goin' to buy to-day!"

"Then what did ye tell me to take the bank-book for?" cried little Wetherspun.

"Wal, I did n't know but you'd want to show Mr. Daskill we had money to buy with, if we should conclude to, arter matewer deliberation."

"Matewer deliberation! What a woman you be! Had n't we concluded?"

"It seems you had," she replied grimly, having now fixed the responsibility just where she wanted it. "So no matter for me. How many sheers did ye take?"

"Eight, fifty dollars apiece; took all the bank money but a little interest."

"Why! I'd no idee you was goin' to buy so much!"

"What! when we had a chance at fifty? If you're sick, we can sell out now and make a penny. I had an offer as I was comin' out of the store,—fifty-five for all I had."

"I want to know! did ye?" And the good wife brightened.

"Yis. Dave Sawney axed if I'd been buyin,' an' I kin'

o' laughed, and said, 'Yis, I'm one of the foolish ones.' 'You *air* foolish,' says he, 'if ye paid over fifty-five. I'd like to buy, but dumbled if I'll give more'n that. How many sheers did ye lay in?' says he; an' when I told him, he said he'd like to take 'em off my hands at fifty-five. But I laughed ag'in, for I felt perty nice, I tell ye; an' I said I guessed I'd consider on 't awhile fust. But now if you think's best, I can go right back and take him up at his offer."

"I don't say I think's best," replied Mrs. Wetherspun. "If they're wuth fifty-five to him, they're wuth fifty-five to us."

Thus the Bubbling Run Oil Company's scheme throve in Waybrook.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MRS. CHILGROVE INSTALLED.

HAVING made choice of a companion, Marian had in like manner decided what room she should occupy. True, she had consulted her husband about it; but he said, "Give her any room you please. I leave this matter entirely to you."

"The little chamber next to my dressing-room, — how would that do?" said Marian.

"Very well. Only I am afraid that is too near. To tell the truth, I am beginning to be a trifle jealous of your new friend. The prospect of her coming has brightened you up amazingly. I don't want to be left out in the cold," said Adolphus, with playful fondness.

"You know there is no danger of that!" replied Marian, rosy and radiant in the light of his smile. "It is your thoughtfulness, your goodness, that has brightened me, and made me very happy. But if you really think the room is too near —"

"That is for you to decide. I am not going to dictate. Still, it does occur to me that it might not be convenient to have your companion always within sound of your voice. There will be times when you will wish to be alone, whatever you may think now. You will be better friends if you can be independent of each other, — separate, and yet within easy reach. You must remember, besides, that you are the mistress, and not be on too familiar terms with her."

"I see you are quite right," said Marian, — "as you always are, dear Adolphus!"

And she proceeded to suggest other rooms. "Oh, yes; that will do very well" was his comment on each. But then it occurred to him, one was too small; another too large; and the third did not suit the lady's complexion. At last she timidly suggested the chamber adjoining Clarence's.

"Well, that is retired; and it is one of the pleasantest rooms in the house," said Adolphus.

"But —" Marian was herself going to raise an objection here, remembering the disturbance Clarence sometimes made in that part of the house. She checked herself, however, in time to avoid touching on that delicate ground. "I was going to say, — but, no, dear; that won't be too far off."

"Besides," said Adolphus, "if she is the sort of woman I take her for, I shall hope that she may be useful to Clarence. This is your own affair, however. Put her in the room next to yours, after all, if you prefer to."

Naturally, she did not prefer to. The next day she brought home Mrs. Chilgrove. Marian drove the mouse-colored horse with her own fair hands; and proud and glad and lovely was she, that golden October afternoon. The pale, impenetrable countenance of the young widow served to set off the glow of the bride's more girlish beauty. In the overflow of her youthful spirits, Marian did not know that she did all the talking, and that her companion sat silent by her side, pleasantly smiling at everything, indeed, but thinking all the while her own deep thoughts.

The weather was so fine, they took a little turn about the village before driving home; showed themselves to the delighted Mrs. Fenway a minute at her door; then, "We must see my husband just a moment," said Marian; and away they flew, after the fleet greyhound of a horse, whirling up with light, twinkling wheels to the counting-room steps. Mr. Daskill came out to them.

"Adolphus, you remember Mrs. Chilgrove," said Marian.

"Most agreeably!" And off went the merchant's polite hat to the coldly-nodding, pale widow. "I would ask you in, but I am full of business."

"Oh, we can't stop. Come early to tea, won't you, dear?"

"If I can get away. Keep a tight rein, Marian!"

And away went the beautiful, girlish wife again, with the much-experienced, silent woman by her side. A strangely abstracted, intense, and by no means angelic, expression darkened his face as he gazed after them. Was he criticising Marian's style of driving? She never *could* learn to keep a tight rein.

Yet a pretty sight it was: little gloved hands guiding the even-paced, mouse-colored steed; exquisitely moulded form jauntily erect, leaning slightly forwards in a gracefully alert attitude; blond curls tossing in the wind; fresh, joyous countenance beaming with smiles; the other form reclined indolently backwards, with cold, quiet, impassive features; the bright shell of a buggy gliding beneath over-arched elms, through the golden-barred purple light of the October afternoon. A pretty sight indeed, which many eyes followed, and which one frank, honest pair stared at almost rudely.

"Good heavens! do you know that woman?"

The person who stared, and who put this abrupt question, was a stranger in the village, a short, russet-bearded, full-faced man of forty, young-looking, and immaculately dressed in a suit of gray, — Ralph Rocknam of Remus, as the hotel register showed, and father of one of Miss Maybloom's boarding-school girls, pretty Priscilla Rocknam.

The person to whom the question was addressed was Julia Farnell. Julia and her pupil, Priscilla (who had become enthusiastically attached to her), and Priscilla's young-looking father were walking down High Street together; and Mr. Rocknam, who had been very earnest to make Miss Farnell's acquaintance, was thanking her for her very great kindness

to his motherless girl (he had lost his wife a year or two before) when they met Marian driving home.

"Oh, yes," said Julia, "that is Mrs. Daskill,—a very charming woman! I have known her all my life."

"Daskill?" Ralph Rocknam repeated, turning to look back at the buggy after it had passed. His face wore a curiously puzzled expression as he turned again to Julia. "Which is Mrs. Daskill?"

"The younger one with the reins."

"She Mrs. Daskill! And that woman with her! I am more astonished than ever."

"Then it is the other woman you meant to ask me about. Do *you* know her?"

"I have n't that honor. But I know those who have—though I'm not so sure of their esteeming it an honor. Mrs. Daskill does n't know her, it is evident!"

"I hear that she is going to live with Mrs. Daskill," said Julia.

"Live with her!" exclaimed Ralph Rocknam. "Mrs. Lafitte going to live with Daskill's wife! That's too much!"

"You must be mistaken in the person," Julia replied. "That lady is Mrs. Chilgrove; I never heard of Mrs. Lafitte."

"I don't care what name she goes under now; I think I know the woman," said Ralph. "And I find I might better have held my tongue about her, not being much of a dealer in second-hand gossip. I know nothing about her *of my own knowledge*, as the lawyers say; so please consider what I have said unsaid."

"I shall not repeat it," replied Julia. "But I have a very great regard for Mrs. Daskill; and if there is anything about Mrs. Chilgrove which she ought to know, I wish you would tell me enough, so that I may give her a friendly warning."

The father of Priscilla turned off on the roadside, and knocked the heads of the dusty golden-rods with his cane.

"Before saying anything more of Mrs. Lafitte,—or Mrs. Chilgrove, as you call her," he said, after a little reflection,— "I ought to know more. I think I can get some positive information with regard to her; and I will if you desire it. Will you allow me to write to you, if I have anything to communicate?"

"I shall be very grateful, if you will," answered Julia.

Meanwhile Marian alighted with her new friend at the door of the Folly. Then Steve, the stable-boy, drove the mouse-colored horse down to the store, for Mr. Daskill; and in due time Adolphus himself, keeping a tight rein, his head thrown back and slightly to one side, rode rapidly up the hill and wheeled gracefully into the driveway, with the decorous dog Romeo on the seat beside him, while Steve plodded home on foot.

Tea was announced; but Adolphus was in no hurry to come in. He walked leisurely about the place, criticising the gardener's work, and giving him orders for the morrow, stopping even to prune a young vine with his own hands, but yielded graciously when Marian went out to fetch him.

"You forget Mrs. Chilgrove is here," said Marian; "or you don't take half the interest in her I do."

"Oh, yes, I take a very great interest in her, on your account," replied Adolphus, and went cheerfully to meet and welcome the new inmate of his household.

He had previously remarked to both Marian and Mrs. Downey that he would himself introduce Mrs. Chilgrove to Clarence, who was, accordingly, to be kept out of her sight until a fitting occasion should arrive. "First impressions go so far," he had said, "and this is a matter which has to be managed with a good deal of tact."

It was perhaps the consciousness of this duty before him that troubled Adolphus at tea. His intention seemed good to make the hospitable ceremony pass off pleasantly for

Marian and their guest, but his manner was constrained, in spite of his sociable endeavors, and his complexion, never very clear, was darkened, and by no means beautified, by a deep purple flush.

Marian noticed his nervousness, — so rare in a person of his self-poise, — and said to herself, “Is it possible that he knows she does n’t like him? Maybe he dislikes her. How good in him to sacrifice his own feelings on my account!”

As for the lady herself, she had composedly taken her place in the family, and her manner was wholly unembarrassed and serene.

After tea, Mrs. Downey, who had remained with Clarence, made her appearance, and, with hands folded on her belt, sat down primly on the edge of a chair. Then Adolphus gave Marian a look, who, judging that the time had come for him to speak with Mrs. Chilgrove more fully than she had yet done concerning Clarence, rose and left the room. After a while she returned, and found Mrs. Downey alone.

“Where are Adolphus and Mrs. Chilgrove?” she inquired.

“He has taken her to Clarence’s room,” replied Mrs. Downey, in her stiffest and most formal manner.

Marian was aware that the aunt was not well pleased with Mrs. Chilgrove’s coming into the house, and she forbore to question her further. She sat down, feeling strangely disheartened and lonely. The shadow, as of some coming dread event, was on her spirit. She tried to read, to sew, to draw Mrs. Downey into conversation, — all in vain. At length Adolphus returned alone.

“It is very singular,” said he. “I never saw Clarence take to anybody as he does to this stranger. They are talking together as quietly and pleasantly as if he had known her all his life. It removes a great weight of anxiety from my mind.”

“I am so glad!” exclaimed Marian, with a fond smile.

And yet she could not help feeling pangs of jealousy and remorse, to find that another woman had the power which she lacked, of winning the gratitude of the father through her gentle and benignant influence over the son.

After this, Mrs. Chilgrove frankly owned to Marian that she liked Mr. Daskill better.

"His tender care of his son is a very beautiful trait," she remarked.

She also took early occasion to inform Mrs. Fenway that her first prejudices against that lady's son-in-law were wearing off, and that everything was lovely in the Daskill household.

And yet Marian was not altogether happy. Nor did Mrs. Chilgrove's sky remain long unclouded in her new position.

One afternoon, in Marian's absence, a young lady called at the house, and Mrs. Chilgrove went down to speak with her.

"Mrs. Daskill is not at home," she graciously informed the visitor.

"I am aware of it. I saw her drive away with Mr. Daskill. It is for that reason I have called at this time, for I thought it best to see you alone."

Something in the visitor's tone or manner seemed to strike Mrs. Chilgrove unfavorably. She grew icily polite as she seated herself.

"You do me a very great honor. This is Miss Farnell, I think."

"It is," replied Julia; "and, if I am not misinformed, you are Mrs. Lafitte."

The two ladies looked steadily at each other for a moment, the pale one becoming a shade paler, while the expression of her eyes grew strangely intense.

"Am I to take this as a declaration of war, Miss Farnell?" she asked, after a pause.

"I know of no reason why you should," replied Julia.

"My friends do not call me by that name."

"I do not claim to be your friend. But I am not, consequently, your enemy, and if I have called you by a name which is not yours, then I have been misinformed, and must ask your pardon."

"I do not care to have my domestic history known wherever I go," said Mrs. Chilgrove. "It is nothing to be proud of, though the fault is not mine. But, since you have heard something of it, I will frankly tell you that Lafitte is the name of my second husband. When I was divorced from him, I discarded his name and took again that of my first husband, as I had a right to do."

The rare flush was stealing into the white cheeks, and the lady spoke with unusual spirit, though in a low and perfectly modulated tone of voice. Julia's voice in reply was low, earnest, tremulous.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Chilgrove, if I have called up unwelcome recollections. It is not a pleasant matter that brings me here; it must needs be painful to both of us. I have come as Mrs. Daskill's friend. I have heard a very extraordinary piece of news regarding you, which I shall not willingly impart to her unless I am forced to do so."

"What will force you to do anything so disagreeable?" said Mrs. Chilgrove, coldly sarcastic.

"You may," answered Julia.

"I? How so?"

"By refusing to comply with what I am going to request."

"What is that?"

"That you will leave this house, this town, and never come between her and her husband again."

Mrs. Chilgrove laughed, with something mocking and evil in her eyes.

"A modest request, truly. Why should I comply with it?"

"For her sake, Mrs. Chilgrove. Think of her, so young,

so confiding, just married; and oh," pleaded Julia, "do not stay to poison her happiness, to blast her life!"

"Has n't my happiness been poisoned?" Mrs. Chilgrove retorted, with swift, stinging words of hate and scorn. "Has n't my life been blasted? Then why should I step out of my path for her, if I find her under my feet?"

"Have you no heart of mercy?" Julia answered, sorrowfully and very softly. "Do not visit on her dear, innocent head the wrongs you have suffered from others."

"Have I suffered nothing from her?" cried Mrs. Chilgrove, now all in a blaze. "You come to me as her friend. As her friend, take this advice. Let me alone! Here I am. Here I stay. I have my rights. She has not quite deprived me of them, and you cannot."

"I am sorry to have made you angry," said Julia. "I hoped that when you knew what I know, you would see how impossible it is that you should remain here, and quietly, without scandal and without unnecessary pain to yourself or any one, go away."

"And it does n't occur to you that you are asking a great deal? Well, what do you know? Let's talk business."

"I have a letter which I will show you, if you wish to see it."

"By all means. Let's understand each other"

Julia produced a letter, which the other reached out her long, slim, white fingers to take, and afterwards read through, without a word of comment, from beginning to end. Then, with a cold, defiant smile, she refolded it, and sat with it clasped in both hands.

"Will you give me back the letter?" said Julia.

"Why should I?"

"Because it is not yours; and, for one thing, to save me the trouble of procuring a copy of it, if I find it necessary."

"I don't care for it." And Mrs. Chilgrove contemptuously

returned the missive. "Somebody I don't know takes an amazing interest in my affairs. Give him my compliments; and tell him if he had come to me, I could have helped him write a much more damaging letter than that. He hasn't told half the story. I am a much worse woman—a far more desperate woman—than he has yet found out."

"Do you acknowledge," said Julia, with grief and distress, "that these charges against you are true?"

"As truth goes in this world, they will pass. If I should tell you that what is true in my life from an observer's point of view is utterly false from mine, you would not understand me. So let it go."

In return for scorn, Julia gave gentleness of reproof.

"I do understand you, Mrs. Chilgrove. I don't believe you are so bad at heart as this story would make you appear. You have had trials, wrongs, no doubt; and I have no desire to judge you. On the contrary, I will be your friend, if you will let me. You know I have not come from any bad motive towards you or any one. I want only what is right. I want what is due to my poor, dear Marian, nothing more."

"Do I owe her anything?" said Mrs. Chilgrove. "You say she has done me no wrong. I'd as lieve tell you as not,—she has got the man who should have been my husband. Is that something to be passed over in silence? To have robbed a woman like me!"

"If that is so, you must consider that she was innocent of any wrong intention. I am sure she did not know she was robbing you; to this day she is ignorant that you ever had any claims on Mr. Daskill's heart or hand. Then will you seek to be revenged on her? No, Mrs. Chilgrove! take the nobler course. Let her remain in ignorance, and leave her to win back the love which she hardly yet knows she has lost."

Mrs. Chilgrove smiled bitterly.

"Do you suppose a pretty little petted creature like her could ever command the heart of a man like Adolphus Daskill? She pleased his fancy, that is all. He is tired of her already. I shall take from her nothing that is hers, or that she has the power to hold. But, unless you interfere, I can keep her in her place, and prevent him from going out after other women, — as he certainly will, if I leave them. Shall it be peace between us?"

"Not on such terms," Julia replied firmly. "If it is as you say, then the sooner Marian knows everything the better. I will tell her at once. I will meet her on the way home; and she will never set foot in this house again, while you are here."

Mrs. Chilgrove felt that she had met a spirit equal to her own. She hesitated, and then said, "Will you delay telling her a few days?"

"For what?"

"You ask a great deal of me, Miss Farnell. I wish for a little time to consider it."

"How much time do you ask?"

"Ten days."

"It is too much. This is a matter that should be settled at once."

"Then regard it as settled," said Mrs. Chilgrove haughtily. "I stay."

Julia started to go, but turned back.

"Mrs. Chilgrove," she said, "I don't mean to forget that *you* have a side in this matter. I will give you ample time to consider what you had better do, and to make all your arrangements. I will wait ten days."

"Thank you, Miss Farnell! We had better leave it so."

CHAPTER XXXV.

WILL GETS A LONG-PROMISED RIDE.

MR. DASKILL started for Buffalo that afternoon, and Marian went to drive him to the train. She sat in the buggy, holding the reins, while he stepped upon the platform of a car; then watched with dreamy eyes as the train sped away. Was she so sad at parting from him? Or did she remember how a young girl once, wild with remorse for her own false conduct, and fear of losing her lover, sat in the stage-coach there, and saw him whirled away on that iron track, — to return to her no more? Did she ever have such a lover? Was that frantic young girl herself?

It was some minutes before she roused from her reverie, and summoned a resolution to turn the horse towards home. Perhaps she had been waiting for the stage-coach to get off and leave the way clear for her. It rolled away at last, pitching and lurching, with its freight of passengers and trunks; and she followed in its wake. The fond husband's parting words to her had been, "Now keep a tight rein as you drive back, Marian!" Had she forgotten them? She drove with a slack rein; her hands lay upon her lap; the long-stepping horse walked.

It was now November; the autumn foliage, which had been in its glory that afternoon when she took Mrs. Chilgrove home, was faded and fallen, and flying in the wind. She could not help thinking that the golden hopes that colored the world for her then had also faded and fallen, leaving the boughs of life bleak and bare.

Yet she hardly knew what she had to complain of. Mrs.

Chilgrove was a pleasant companion; and Adolphus was kinder now than he had been for a long while before. Clarence was better. Was she jealous of Clarence? She felt that she ought to be grateful because the companion she had chosen for herself could do so much for him. And she was grateful; she did not begrudge a moment of the time, nor any part of the affectionate sympathy, which Mrs. Chilgrove gave the poor boy. But she was made to feel keenly her own failure in duty towards him; and it must be owned that the long evening hours which the companion and the husband sometimes spent together in the son's room were to the wife hours of heart-breaking loneliness.

Had her desire to establish confidential relations with Mrs. Chilgrove met with the least encouragement on the part of that lady? Why, yes; Mrs. Chilgrove had listened acquiescently, and drawn her on to make disclosures of her own heart; but it had been much as a person of superior age and experience calls out the impulsive prattle of a child, giving never a word of her own secret thought and life in return. Subsequent reflection upon the lady's way with her at these times generally brought to Marian some stinging mortification and regret. And all the while she had a growing sense of something kept from her by a sort of conspiracy among all the members of the household, — something which even the sour and dissatisfied Mrs. Downey perceived, but which remained impenetrable to herself.

She was pondering this state of things, and wondering how it was to end, and the ebb of her spirits was very low indeed, when she perceived a young man walking before her on the roadside. A somewhat sturdy young fellow, with the lapels of his light-brown coat thrown loosely back and the ample brim of his picturesque hat carelessly slouched, — he was on the whole a rather interesting and noticeable figure, wonderfully so to Marian, as it appeared.

She was all in a flutter of surprise and embarrassment when the fast-stepping horse brought the buggy alongside the traveller. He was walking slowly, in a pensive mood, and did not look up until she spoke.

"Will Rayburn! is that you?"

He replied, with a pleasant look of recognition: "How do you do, — Mrs. Daskill, I suppose I am to say?"

"Oh, no! I am Marian still to my old friends," said the young wife, flashing all her fascinations upon him as she drew rein. "Won't you ride?"

"Thank you, Mrs. Daskill. I think I had better not."

"I don't see why. How it will look for me to drive past you with an empty seat, and leave you to plod along on foot!"

"How it will look for you to pick me up!" said Will.

There were two conflicting sides to Marian's character: schooled as she was to shape her conduct by rules of prudent self-interest, she was also capable of acting with strange impulsiveness.

"Get in!" she said sweetly.

And in he got, observing with a laugh as she drove on, —

"So, it seems, I am to ride after Mr. Daskill's horse, after all! He promised me this treat. But — won't he object to furnishing the driver?"

"I see nothing that he can reasonably object to. Did he really promise you a ride?" Marian asked, with a beaming side-glance at her companion. ("How handsome he is, with that brown beard!" she thought.)

"Yes, several — rides in the plural number. That was when I had my lame ankle. But I knew the coming horse and buggy were not for me. Now I don't know what I am riding with you for! Stop, and let me get out."

She seemed determined to ignore the fact that there had ever been anything between them which should prevent their meeting on friendly terms.

"You didn't seem at all surprised when I overtook you," she remarked.

"I was n't. I saw you waiting at the depot, and knew you would be coming after me."

"And you were not going to look up!"

"Not till after you had passed. Then I was going to have a good look at you."

"Then you did care to see me?" she said coquettishly.

"Do you think me a man of stone?" he gravely answered.

He was not, then, indifferent to her. Marian was silent for a moment, enjoying the thrill which this assurance brought.

"Strange," she said at length, "that I should have happened to be at the depot on your arrival, just as I happened to be there the morning you went away, — you remember?"

"Do I remember?" echoed Will. "But was that a mere happening?"

"Why, what else could it have been?" she answered, with evasive archness, — perhaps to call him out, — for she could be a sly little prevaricatrix, upon occasion.

"I don't know. I had no vanity to whisper foolish things to me then. But somehow, I fancied — oh, well!" exclaimed Will, interrupting himself, "we must n't talk of those things now!"

"Yes! talk of them!" she insisted. "What did you fancy?"

"Why, that you had come over here that morning for me."

"But would n't that have been a foolish errand?"

"No!" said Will, "not if you were obeying the true impulse of your heart. But if you came merely to leave a last sting in mine by showing me your face just as I was leaving you forever, that was not merely foolish, it was worse."

"I am not so wicked as that! But if I had been obeying a true impulse, and you had known that I was, what would you have done?"

"Once, I might have broken my neck jumping off the train for you. Wise as I was then, I should have gone on my journey just the same, and waited to know how deep and constant that impulse was. If I heard of your marriage in a few weeks, what could I have thought? Naturally, that it was but a weak and short-lived impulse, and that it was lucky I did not risk my neck in making any very desperate leap."

Marian was silent again. No sweet thrill this time, but a pang of self-reproach and regret. Still she could not let the dangerous matter be; she must play with the fire. Yearning to know just how he felt towards her, and whether she had yet lost all power over him, she said, —

"What if you had not heard of my marriage?"

Will paused before answering; then turned and looked at her with the old searching, sincere, truth-compelling gaze.

"You are the same Marian, I see. Is my heart a pear or a peach, that you should always want to be putting your little thumb into it, to see how soft it is? You don't really care for me, and never did; and if you did, you are a married woman now. So never mind what has been or what might have been. How is my mother? When did you see her last?"

"Shall I tell you?" she cried, one of her wild impulses seizing her. "It was the night before you left home. I walked by your house. I stopped and looked in at the window. I saw you and her talking together. It was all I could do to keep from going in. Will, you say I never cared for you! If it had n't been for my father, I could n't have come away without speaking to you that night. Then I felt that if I could only ride over in the coach with you the next morning, and see you for the last time, — but you did not go in the coach. And you did not get off the train when you saw me; you did not come back, nor write to me."

All the disappointment, the long-pent-up misery and despair which marriage had brought to her, in place of the happiness

and peace it promised, swelled her heart and gave impetus to the passion with which she spoke. Perhaps, also, something besides mere memory of the old love and grief came back. Tears were flashing in her eyes as she drew tight the reins and let the horse speed away.

Will had not wished to hear such a confession as that. He could not doubt the truth of it; yet might it not have been partly the desire to try its effect on him which prompted her to make it? Not that she could have seriously designed to renew her flirtation with him; but the old habit was still strong, the restless longing she always had to test his feeling for her, and to provoke and agitate him when he appeared indifferent.

A man's sense of propriety seems often finer than a woman's. Her ill-timed and indiscreet candor was not welcome; it hurt and embarrassed him. How should he deal truly and honorably with this dear, beautiful, passionate, unhappy girl? One thing was certain, he must not give way to any of the old feelings which their coming again together might revive. He did not even let himself think how delicious it might have been to indulge them, nor triumph in the knowledge that she had never been another's as she had been and still was his.

He reached out and gently laid hold of the reins, spoke to the horse, and subdued his pace to a slow trot.

"Marian," he said, "I did n't want you to tell me what you did just now. We had better let the past be; but since it has come up, let us understand each other. I have thought of you a great deal, and so wholly unselfish is my regard for you that I have hoped, I have constantly prayed, that you might find happiness in your marriage."

"Oh, I have! I am very happy," said Marian, ashamed of her imprudence. "Why do you think I am not?"

"Such outbursts of feeling do not come from a calm and satisfied heart," Will answered. "Are you speaking truly now? Marian, you know that I know you are not." After a

pause he added : "Marian, if there is to be anything between us in the future, let it be the truth. Tell me nothing of yourself, if you like ; but if you speak at all, let it be in simple sincerity, as to one who, whatever he may have been to you, is now, henceforth and always, your friend."

"Then you don't utterly despise me?" she said with a pretty frown of self-hatred, biting her lovely lip. "I should think you would! Is there another such weak, foolish, inconsistent creature in the world? Can you still be my friend?"

"I feel powerless to tell you how truly I can be ; but I might *show* you, if the occasion ever should come when you required my friendship. Have you such a friend as you need?"

"No," said Marian. "Julia broke with me after I broke with you. There's nobody in the world to take her place. I am afraid of my mother. Lottie doesn't believe in me, nor understand me. And though I have a husband and a companion —" She paused, afraid of what she was going to say.

"What companion?" Will inquired.

"Mrs. Chilgrove. You remember her?"

"Very well indeed! But what do you mean? Companion?"

"Yes; I don't know what else to call her. She is not a servant; but she lives with me, and helps about my sewing and other things."

Will gave an involuntary shudder.

"You don't like her! Why not?"

"Why don't I like a serpent? I may have no ill-will towards it. I can tolerate it in its place. But if I see it crawling about a child — ugh!"

A feeling of fright and faintness came over Marian. It was a disagreeable subject, and he changed it.

"Tell me about the Farnells: how are they getting along?"

"I don't know much about them," replied Marian, who

would have preferred going back to the old topic and talking about herself. "Julia is still working hard to give the girls an education and support the old man in his idleness. But there is talk of her soon getting beyond that."

"How so?"

"She has a beau."

"She always had several, only waiting for her to give them a little encouragement."

"This is not one of those. He is a widower of forty, very rich, they say. He is the father of one of the seminary girls. She has been home and told him what a lovable being Miss Farnell is, and he has come to see her and judge for himself. He has been for some time looking for a wife; and now I suppose he has found one."

"Have you any authority for that but hearsay?"

"Hearsay and eye-evidence. He lately came over from Remus to visit his daughter, but, instead of going back that day or the next, he stayed three days, and took her and Julia to ride every evening except the last, when he took Julia alone."

Will was silent for a moment, then said,—

"I am heartily glad of it, if he is a good and worthy man! I don't believe in marrying for money any more than I believe in committing any other sin. But I believe in marriage; and that would be hardly possible for Julia, now or for some years to come, unless the man of her choice happens also to be a man of means. She is not a girl to leave her family unprovided for; but if necessary, she will sacrifice herself for them in every way but one."

"What way is that?"

"She will not marry a rich man merely because he is rich, even for their sakes. I know her well enough to be sure of that. She is a girl of extraordinary virtue and courage and truth."

Every word of praise Will bestowed on Julia had for Marian a sting of reproach.

"I thought *you* would come back and marry Julia," she said, still mellowing the peach.

"That is out of the question. I have already told you why she cannot marry a poor man."

"You thought *somebody else* might marry you, without committing any very great folly."

"*Somebody else* was not situated as Julia is. If *somebody else* had chosen to brave the world with me—but we are not going to talk of that."

"I imagined you would come back with a fortune," said Marian.

"I should have liked a fortune, with the motive I once had to gain one." It was sweet for her to think she was the motive. "But now," he went on, "why should I care to be rich? I should like to see if there is n't something worth living for besides wealth and respectability."

Something smote coldly on Marian's heart. It was as if he had blasphemed her household gods.

"Don't you believe in respectability?" she falteringly asked.

"Since I have been away," said Will, "I have seen everybody striving for two things,—wealth and appearance. Money, money, money is the talk one hears everywhere, on the street, in hotels and railroad cars; how to get it, who has it, who has lost it. Then on Sunday appears the great pageant of respectability. I got sick of it all, and thought I would come back, and live with the trees and flowers and cattle, and try to be sane all by myself, if I could n't coax anybody else to be sane with me. I will consider the lilies of the field. I don't belong in that mad crowd anyhow."

Marian's heart contracted more and more, as perhaps he meant it should.

"O Will," she feebly objected, "I'm afraid I don't under-

stand you. I'm afraid I can't sympathize with you in all you say."

"I don't expect you to. Between you and me, there is a great gulf. On your side, fashion, conventionality, the mere forms and traditions of religion. We can never come together. I cannot go to you; and will you ever choose the way of peace and righteousness? I have thought a great deal about you and your mother, Marian, and prayed for your conversion."

It seemed to her that he must be uttering a terrible sarcasm. She was moderately pious, she hoped, enough so, at least, for the practical purposes of salvation; but the kind of religion he talked made her afraid. Her rekindling passion for him was cooled, for a time at least.

They were approaching the village, and now once more the timid and calculating side of Marian's character regained the ascendancy. She began to dread the eyes of people, and to wonder what this one and that one would say when they saw her and Will Rayburn riding together. He read her secret thought. And when she turned into a by-street, in order not to be seen driving with him through the heart of the village, he leaped to the ground.

"Won't you let me take you home?" she asked, in a feeble tone of remonstrance.

"No, thank you. Good by."

"Poor Will!" she murmured to herself, inclined to pity him, for the moment seeing only the poor young man without prospects, unsuccessful in business and in love.

Then suddenly rose before the eyes of her spirit a different image, — a youthful and radiant soul, superior to fortune, transfiguring mean conditions, and dwarfing all her own ideas of life by his nobler standard.

Marian turned the mouse-colored horse, and, with a wretched sense of loss and misgiving, drove homeward through the village.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A BLOW AT THE BUBBLING RUN.

THE cheerful air with which Will carried himself covered some very serious thoughts. His meeting with Marian had awakened sadder and more tender emotions than he betrayed; and now it was with a swelling heart that he gazed up the street and saw the little old house which he still called home.

In the dull light of the fading November afternoon, it looked rather lonely to him, it must be owned. The smoke from the chimney told him that his mother was there; was she cooking her solitary supper? Poor old widow! He thrilled to think of her surprise and pleasure at sight of him. Yet he knew that she had set her heart on his success; and here he was, in the eyes of the world at least, a failure. He was sorry to disappoint her; and he dreaded her reproaches and complaints.

There was Ward Farnell's cottage beyond, with many another familiar roof in view. The bare elms, the dead leaves of the oak-trees still fluttering in the wind, the brown fields, the desolate gardens, the sound of the waterfall, and the noise of the trip-hammers, the peculiar autumnal odors in the air, the children in the street or in front yards, the cattle coming home, the distant cow-bell,—in these sights and sounds and scents the spirit of all the Novembers of all his life seemed to revive. Memories crowded upon him; and if some were bitter, if the pale ghost of many a once bright joy and hope flitted before him, sighed in the wind, and rustled in the fallen leaves, if the old sense of wrong and grief came up,—is it

very strange? Some shadowy forebodings, too, must have troubled so sensitive a soul. He was not indifferent to the good opinion of good people; and he knew how many would shake their heads at his odd notions and his bad luck.

Mrs. Rayburn was putting her solitary plate and cup and saucer on the board when her son came in.

"You may as well set the table for two, while you are about it, mother," he said in the old cheery way, much as if he had only gone off in the morning and come home at night.

"William!" she exclaimed, putting the last dish hurriedly in its place; and, turning to meet him, she clasped his outstretched hand and dropped her head on his shoulder. Her form trembled, and there was a sob or two; then she drew back far enough to look at him, laughing in a nervous hysterical way, and wiping her eyes with her apron. "Why did n't you let me know you was coming?"

"I hardly knew it myself," said William, "till all at once it came to me that I was to start. Then I did n't expect to come directly home. I have loitered by the way,—walked a good deal; but to-day, seeing a train stop at a station, it occurred to me that if I stepped aboard of it, I might take supper with my mother. And here I am. Will there be toast enough for two?"

Mrs. Rayburn had many questions to ask, and he frankly told her his story. To his surprise, she did not reproach him or complain: she was too glad to see him home once more. He fell into the old homely way of life as if he had not been more than a day out of it, and soon found himself lifting the teakettle for her, bringing water, and preparing wood for the morning's fire. Two thankful hearts were at rest that night under the old roof.

The next forenoon Will walked into the fork factory. Amidst the smoke and dust and flying sparks and the din of the trip-hammers, he found his friend Miles, who received

him with great cordiality, and took him into the counting-room, where they could have a quiet talk together.

"You see," said Will, "I have come to take you at your word; that is, if you have anything left for me to do."

"I believe you are just the man I want," said Miles; "and you have come at the right time. Water has been low nearly all summer, and the work has got behindhand, so that now we have our hands full. Besides, Walter, who has been helping me about my books in his vacation, is at school again, and I'm bothered to keep my accounts square."

"I'm delighted to hear it!" said Will. "Your need is my opportunity. What am I to do?"

"I want a good, faithful bookkeeper and cashier, most of anything. Then, after you get the run of things, there will be much of the general business you can attend to as well as I. What I have been wanting for some time is a partner; but a young man like you, William, who can be depended on to take an interest in the shop and give his energies to it, will answer my purpose. I only wish I could offer you satisfactory wages."

"Maybe you can. What can you afford?"

"Not more than twelve dollars a week at first, I'm afraid."

"Why, twelve dollars is munificent!" cried Will. "When shall I begin?"

"Any time."

"Now?"

"This minute," said Miles, laughing.

"To-day is Saturday," replied Will. "Let my regular work begin next Monday. In the meanwhile I'll look around and see what I can learn."

"Very well. Walter will be out of school this afternoon, and he will show you about the books. I'm very busy now."

"So am I," said Will. "I've just got a situation."

Miles returned to his work, and Will began at once to learn

the routine of the shop. At noon he carried home the news to his mother. His mind was now at rest; he was sure of earning a livelihood, and of making her comfortable, and the thought of being employed in so useful a business, with so genial and upright a man as Miles Fenway, made him thankful and happy. She had taken a very gloomy view of his prospects when he went out in the morning, and though she brightened a little when he told her that Miles had hired him, she did not know how much reliance to place upon the cheerfulness of his countenance, which, it must be confessed, had sometimes beamed upon her most hopefully when his future seemed most dark.

"Well, I don't suppose he pays you much," she murmured.

"How much do you suppose?"

"Well, I d'n' know, — may be six dollars a week."

"And how much do you think he ought to pay me?"

"I should n't think you ought to get less than ten."

"Mother," cried Will, "we are millionnaires: I am to have twelve dollars a week at the start."

"Why! I want to know! Ain't that pretty good?"

"It's princely, mother!"

"Well, I d'n' know. 'T aint much, come to think on't. You've had more."

"Yes, when I was expected to sell my conscience with my services."

"I hope nothing of that kind will interfere with your keeping this place. You may not have another such streak of luck."

"I don't call this luck, mother. It has been provided. I have felt for a long while that it was to be. And something more is to come of it for all of us. Oh!" exclaimed Will, "if I could only learn to have faith in my intuitions without fear of confounding what I wish or I think with what my soul perceives!"

That afternoon he learned all that Walter could show him about the accounts and correspondence, and commenced work in earnest on Monday. He soon mastered the details of the business, and was prepared to lend a hand at anything,—weighing, packing, making boxes, or helping Geordie Lorkins load up his wagon with forks for a fresh trip.

“Will is like another myself,” Miles Fenway said. “It seems now almost as if there were two of me.”

Will’s return home had caused a good deal of remark in the village, but he had set quietly about his work, and gone out of his way for nobody. He was on friendly terms with all the workmen in the shop, and by his calm strength of character, perfect sincerity, and kindness, together with that indescribable something, which, for want of a better name, we call magnetism, he soon came to exercise a great influence over them.

The Bubbling Run fever was at its height at this time, and the men, nearly all of whom had saved a little money, were talking of making investments in Daskill’s speculation. They had hitherto hesitated because Mr. Fenway would not say a word to encourage them in it. But now the shares were going up; and having discussed the matter among themselves, and listened to the advice of Deacon Tibbetts and Mr. Solomon Tompkins, who engaged to get stock for them at fifty-five after it had reached sixty, they had about decided, one and all, to put their earnings into that alluring enterprise.

Will heard a good deal of their conversation, and remained as silent on the subject as Miles himself. But there was a cloud on his spirit when it was spoken of in his presence,—a sort of thunder-cloud, as it proved, when an unlucky head drew the lightning.

It was the head of good old Deacon Tibbetts.

The deacon,—a short, brown, wrinkled, elderly man,—

passing the shop one evening when the boys were washing up, took occasion to step into the yard and ask them how many shares they were likely to want.

"I must know at once," said he; "for Mr. Daskill, who has been keeping them for me, says he can't hold them at a sacrifice much longer. William Rayburn, you ought to have a hand in this. If you want a share or two, I can get 'em for you at the same rate, since you are one of Mr. Fenway's workmen. Mr. Daskill is very glad to favor them."

"Mr. Daskill has no favors for me," William replied. "And I should consider them very doubtful favors from anybody, that came in the shape of shares in the Bubbling Run."

As these were the first words the men had heard from Will on the subject, and as they had found him not much given to the use of strong language without strong reasons, they pricked up their ears. The gate, through which the deacon had entered from the street, stood open, and now sandy-whiskered Solomon Tompkins sauntered in. Two or three others whom Will knew also stopped to see what was going on. He did not seem inclined to continue the conversation, but turned away, and glanced about him with a somewhat troubled look.

"It seems to me, William," said the deacon, "it is hardly becoming in a young man like you to set up your opinion against the experience of men much older than yourself."

William paused, his countenance still troubled; but now a gleam of light shot through the gloom.

"Mr. Tibbetts," he said, "I have spoken only in answer to your questions; and now I will answer you again, as becomingly as I can. After Job's aged friends had talked with him in his affliction, and proved such wretched comforters, — as you perhaps remember, for the story occurs in the book by which you profess to shape your life, — then a youth named Elihu, who had been listening respectfully to their arguments,

was moved to speak. 'I am young,' he said, 'and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion. I said Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.'"

As William finished, the troubled look was gone, and his countenance shone. There was a cackle of delight at the gate, and a glance in that direction showed him old Carolus, leaning on his stick, and peering with sharp features from between furred cloak and cap. There was also a murmur of satisfaction among the men; and the deacon was thrown into some confusion.

"Do you claim that you have that sperit?" he demanded.

"I claim nothing peculiar to myself," William replied. "'There is a spirit in man.' While we are in the midst of this clamor and jostling for money and place, its voice is not heard. But the soul at peace perceives it."

"What do you mean by a soul at peace?" the deacon asked, anxious to draw the young man on to commit himself to some heresy.

"He who has reached within himself the conviction that there is a Spiritual Power in the world, working in all things with love and righteousness, and most wonderfully in man; and who is joyfully content to be one with that Power,—he has a soul at peace."

"Deacon himself could n't have answered his own conundrum so well as that!" cackled old Carolus at the gate. "Hit him agin, Deacon!"

Not finding the young man's theology so vulnerable as he had hoped, the deacon thought best to hit in a different direction.

"You don't believe in making money, I've been told."

"Yes, I do," said William, "if it can be made with right motives, and in the right way. But crafty schemes, drag-

netting society for gain, taking in poor gudgeons," — Will looked round at his fellow-workmen, — "they are another thing."

"You've got it agin, Deacon," squeaked old Carolus, "right where Joab smote Abner, under the fifth rib. You see, I know Scriptur' as well as the rest of ye. Hi, hi, hi! damned if I don't!"

Tibbetts, now a good deal nettled, was trying to think up some scathing retort, when Solomon Tompkins hastened to his relief.

"Young man," said he sternly, "do you venture to call an enterprise got up by Mr. Daskill, and one in which Mr. Fenway is so largely interested, a crafty scheme for drag-netting society?"

"As for Mr. Fenway," William replied, "you know as well as I do that he has had mighty little to do with it."

"And as for Mr. Daskill," struck in Tibbetts, who had now found the sharp thing he had been hunting for, "we all know that William has a spite against him, and the reason why." He turned to the workmen. "Don't let that influence you, boys, in a matter of business like this. We all see where *his* shoe pinches."

William was silent for a moment. It was by this time growing dark in the yard.

"One word, Mr. Tibbetts," he said. "You will remember that I did not begin this discussion. And I don't wish to make any other reply to your last remark, except to call these men to witness that, spite or no spite on my part, I have never before spoken a word to influence them in the matter of the Bubbling Run investments. All I have said, I have said here and now, in your presence. I might say a good deal more, but I shall not, unless my opinion is asked; then I shall feel bound to give it. Excuse me, gentlemen, I want to lock this gate."

"Wait a jiffy, Rayburn!" spoke up one of the men. "I'm one of them that has talked of taking shares in the ile spec'lation. As you say, you've never blowed on it to us before; but I've felt all the time you had a notion about it, and I'd like to know, for one, what it is, and why you don't recommend us to go into it."

"Simply because it is a speculation. It may turn out to be profitable to those who have got it up; perhaps also to those who buy into it now. Profitable in a money sense, I mean. But there is a risk about it. Laboring men like you can't afford to take any risk. Nine speculations out of ten — I might almost say ninety-nine out of a hundred — prove disastrous to those who are led into them. They are lotteries, in which only now and then a prize is taken. They not only rob the poor of their earnings, but of their peace of mind. They cause feverish excitement, and foster a spirit of gambling. They make you discontented with slow, safe, and honest gains. As far as I can learn," William added, with energy, "this Bubbling Run business is doing more just now to corrupt the morals of this community than all its horse-jockeying and rum-selling."

"By Jehoshaphat! that's good!" shrieked old Carolus, striking the ground with his staff.

"You forget some very good men are active in it," said the deacon solemnly.

"I don't know of any," William replied, coolly regarding him.

"What!" cried Tompkins, "do you think Deacon Tibbetts there — I won't say anything about myself — would give his influence to the enterprise without he believed — I may say knew — it was a sound one?"

William smiled, as he stood leaning on the gate.

"Why, yes, — since you ask me the question, — I think either of you capable of doing it for a consideration."

The boys laughed. Old Carolus choked with glee, and went into spasms of coughing, and laughter, and chuckling oaths. Tibbetts was stifling with wrath.

"This is outrageous! this is libellous! it is actionable!" he exclaimed. "What reason have you to think that I am giving my influence for a consideration?"

"A little bird came and told me," replied William.

"You'd better not repeat what the little bird says," cried Tibbetts threateningly.

"Very well. Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no truths."

The boys were tickled again at the unexpected turn Will gave to the proverbial saying.

"I will ask you one question," cried Tibbetts, carried away by his passion, "and I demand to know what reason you have for asserting that I have sold myself for a bribe."

"You are translating what I said into pretty rough language," returned Will. "But never mind. You claim that your action in talking up Bubbling Run is wholly disinterested."

"Entirely so."

"You don't expect to make a profit out of these boys, if you can induce them to buy?"

"Not a cent."

"Are you so benevolent a man as that, Mr. Tibbetts, to spend your time in going about, laboring to induce people to buy shares in which you have no interest? You have lived in this community a good many years, and you have never been much suspected of being that kind of man."

"I acknowledge," said Tibbetts, seeing that he was in a corner and must get out of it, "that I am under some obligations to Mr. Daskill."

"Ho! he does acknowledge that!" cried one of the boys. "That is where *his* shoe pinches!"

Tibbetts found it necessary to explain still further.

"Obligations of a personal character. Mr. Daskill took me and Mr. Tompkins out to the oil regions, showed us the property, and behaved like a gentleman. I think anybody who had seen the property, as we did, would have felt interested to talk it up. It is certainly the most splendid opportunity for safe investment with a prospect of large returns."

He was going on with his prospectus, when William stopped him.

"The boys have heard all that before. Mr. Daskill paid your expenses, did n't he?" As Tibbetts and Tompkins had on various occasions boasted that the trip did n't cost them a cent, the deacon was forced to answer affirmatively. "Yes," William continued; "that is the usual way such things are managed. Mr. Daskill was sowing a little seed in expectation of a harvest. Then he favored you in the purchase of shares."

"Very little," cried Tompkins.

"In fact, none at all," added Tibbetts. "We were the first purchasers; and of course we bought at the lowest figger."

"How many shares have you, and what have they cost you?"

"I don't know as it is necessary to go into partic'lars."

"Have you paid one dollar in cash towards the shares you have bought?" William asked.

"Good as cash," said Tompkins.

"Yes, same thing," said Tibbetts.

"You give your services in talking up the speculation," said William, with the positiveness of a sudden strong conviction which came to him as he spoke. "And you have given Mr. Daskill your promissory-notes. Those notes are to be paid out of the dividends the stock is expected to yield; so that you really take no risk, and the shares do not cost you a

dollar. You are to have more on the same terms, as you induce other people to subscribe."

Will had struck so near the truth that the two advocates of Daskill's scheme stood confounded.

"It amounts, then, to just this," he went on. "You are trying to persuade these hard-working men to take risks which you would n't take, and pay money for stock for which you have n't paid the first dollar. So much for your disinterestedness."

It was necessary for them to say something. But, not knowing what proof Will had to support his assertions, they could not venture to challenge them.

"Do you dare —" began Tibbetts, trembling between anger and confusion.

"Yes!" exclaimed Tompkins, assuming a good deal of bluster, "do you dare, young man, to impeach our honesty?"

"It does n't require much daring to do that," William replied in a tone of kindness and candor. "I don't mean to be unjust to either of you; but you compel me to be very plain. No doubt you flatter yourselves that your conduct is justifiable by the common standard of business morality. But I tell you, no transaction is justifiable in which a man gains an advantage over another by underhand dealing. The business morality which permits that, though it may wear the garb of respectability, is the same as that by which thieves and robbers quiet their consciences."

"Mr. Fenway," Deacon Tibbetts cried out excitedly, "can you stand by and hear a young fellow in your employ talk in that way to — to respectable townspeople?"

Will turned, and beheld in the office door the tall form of Miles, who had evidently been hearing every word he said.

Mr. Fenway hesitated before answering; and when his voice was heard, it betrayed profound emotion.

"I can't say that I approve of all his talk, but I have been

interested in it. And I have taken a good deal of it to myself. I have n't the strong feeling against the Bubbling Run project which he has; yet he has convinced me that I have done wrong to lend my name to it in a way which may have induced others to take risks in it. I never meant to do that; the thing was, in fact, done almost without my knowledge and consent. But I blame myself. And I must say, Mr. Tibbetts, I have been annoyed by the persistency with which you have been urging my men here to take stock. It is n't right, though your motives may not be so bad as he says. Now I think the discussion had better stop. You have rather forced him into it; and it does n't look as though you would gain much by continuing it."

Messrs. Tibbetts and Tompkins seemed to be of the same opinion. They presently went off together, and the crowd dispersed. Old Carolus lingered while Will swung the gate.

"You've hit the Bubbling Run the hardest blow yet!" he chuckled, shaking his staff. "Ye did that when ye hit the deacons. Drag-netting society with their crafty scheme to ketch poor gudgeons,—hi, hi! Ye had 'em there! By Jehosh! ye had 'em there!"

So saying the old man jerked the wires, so to speak, of his rickety anatomy, sprung the joints of his legs, stabbed the sidewalk with his stick, and went cackling and shambling away.

Will locked the gate on the inside, and went into the office. Mr. Fenway was there. It was getting too dark for the two to read each other's features, and Miles grasped the younger man's hand without a word. But they understood each other.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A RUPTURE.

THE news of Will's encounter with the two worthies in the factory yard spread through the village like the proverbial wildfire. On his way home, he met Ward Farnell.

"Well, William, what have you been up to?" said the old man, in high spirits. "Holding out Tompkins and Tibbetts at arm's length, and bumping their heads together? Good enough for 'em! The oil speculation is the biggest humbug going; and you told the truth when you called 'em crafty scoundrels, drag-netting society to haul in silly gudgeons."

"I have heard of your expressing a different opinion of the speculation," remarked Will.

Perhaps Ward Farnell did not remember the hours he had spent with the loungers in Daskill's store and on the tavern steps counting the fortunes that might be made out of the Bubbling Run. At any rate, now that the thing had got one kick, he took pleasure in giving it another.

"Oh! you may have heard of my saying that there were fortunes in oil, as we know there are. I had a splendid plan in my head, all ready to put into operation, when Daskill took the wind out of my sails. He has got a good idea; but the best idea will fail without a good manager,—a good manager, Ward Farnell repeated, with an emphasis and gesture which indicated where the required article might be found. "Daskill, as we all know, is a mere bag of wind; and Tompkins and Tibbetts are just what you called 'em,—crafty scoundrels and hypocrites!"

Will was careful to explain that he had never called them anything of the sort. He hoped to stop such false reports then and there. But a good-sounding phrase with a piquant personal application have a very relishing quality for the average rural intelligence ; and what he had really said was sure to be repeated, with a hundred exaggerations.

The Bubbling Run engrossed so large a share of the public interest, Adolphus was just then so popular, and the aforementioned worthies were so well known in the community, that the affair caused a great excitement. Those who had kept out of the speculation were delighted, and those who had gone into it alarmed. The Wetherspuns were panic-stricken, and little Wetherspun rushed around town, with his hat on the back of his head, trying in vain to find somebody to take his stock off his hands. The demand for shares had suddenly ceased. This state of things brought Mr. Daskill into his father-in-law's counting-room early one forenoon. He looked black at Will, who was at the desk, and asked for Mr. Fenway.

"He is in the shop. I will speak to him," said Will civilly.

He went out, and the long-limbed Miles came in.

"What is all this I hear?" said Adolphus. "Coming back from the oil regions, where I've been for a few days, I'm astounded at certain reports which are calculated to do us great injury."

"What reports?" Miles asked, his tall and rather awkward figure, hairy throat, bare arms, and leather apron appearing loosely picturesque, in comparison with his son-in-law's dashing style. His earnest, honest, clear, open countenance showed also in striking contrast with the other's features, in their dark-purple flush.

"About the row in your yard the other night, when one of your men made scandalous and abusive remarks, aimed at our enterprise, and particularly at me."

"You mean Will Rayburn?" said Miles.

"Yes; the fellow who was turned out of my store last spring. I was a good deal surprised when I learned that you had taken him in here, and I must say amazed when I heard that you indorsed what he said of me and my business."

"What did you hear that he said?"

"That I was doing more to corrupt the morals of the community than all the horse-jockeys and rum-sellers, and that my enterprise was a rascally scheme, drag-netting society for gudgeons."

"And that I indorsed all that?"

"I have it, on good authority, that you did," said Adolphus, with offensive and overbearing positiveness.

Miles remained silent for a moment, looking him full in the face; then said, in a straightforward, sincere manner, —

"I shall be very sorry to have any misunderstanding with you, Mr. Daskill. But it seems to me you don't come here in just the right spirit, making assertions as if you thought I was a man to play one part behind your back and another to your face. If you want to get at the truth of the matter, I claim that I am as good authority for it as anybody who has gone to you and prejudiced your mind in advance."

"Pardon me," said Adolphus, lowering his tone somewhat. "I suppose I may have been a little excited. I don't believe you capable of misstating the matter, and I should like to know, from your own lips, if you did indorse him."

"In the first place, William Rayburn did not say just what you have been told he did. In the next place, I did not approve of all he said, as I openly declared at the time. But I thought much of it was just, and I took a large share of it to myself. Whatever else may be said of him, he is a person of very strong and accurate moral perceptions, and he opened my eyes to the wrong of some things which I had been too careless about. I said that my name and influence had been

given to Bubbling Run almost without my knowledge and consent, and that I had done wrong to permit it."

"But don't you see," said Adolphus, "such admissions as that must be very damaging to the enterprise?"

"Possibly. But it is the fact. I was never pleased with the way in which my name was connected with the affair, and I thought I let you know it plainly enough. The truth is, you and my wife had your way about it in spite of me. I was too easy. Now I am going to resign my position as vice-president and director, and not appear to have anything more to do with the company than I actually have."

"You will do a very unwise and injurious thing, at this time," said Adolphus. "I have just come from the oil regions. Everything is progressing finely. We have already struck a small vein of gas and oil, and are now going deeper for a larger one. The prospect never was so flattering."

"Then it seems to me that you can well afford to dispense with the small local support you get from the use of my name. It is a deceptive support, and I am determined not to lend it any longer."

"But consider the interests of those who have already been induced to go into the speculation."

"If it is a good thing, their interests will not suffer by my withdrawal. If it is a bad thing, I don't wish to be the means of inducing others to go into it."

Finding remonstrance in vain, Daskill once more changed his tone, expressing his astonishment that Mr. Fenway should have stood by and heard one of his hired men publicly denounce the scheme. Miles answered by quoting, as correctly as possible, Will's words. Adolphus was not pacified.

"It was your duty, sir," he exclaimed arrogantly, "to repudiate them on the spot. And now I shall consider it an act of unfriendliness towards me if you keep him another hour in your employ."

Both men had remained standing, but now Miles eased his long, lank form down on a packing-box, placed one leg deliberately over the other, crossed his hands on the leather apron covering his knee, looked at his dangling boot a moment with a curiously amused and melancholy expression, then raised his eyes and once more gazed fixedly at Adolphus.

"You are waiting for something?" he said at last.

"I am waiting for your reply," said Mr. Daskill, imperiously.

"Mr. Daskill," Miles rejoined, "related as we are, — having given the happiness of my dearest child into your keeping, — I am grieved that there should be any trouble between us."

"So am I, sir," said Adolphus; "and I expect you to give me a satisfactory answer."

"When you come to reflect calmly upon what has passed between us," returned the father-in-law, with an almost spiritual sweetness and sincerity, "I trust you will see the impropriety of your manner towards me. Then I shall be glad to talk with you. But now, when you take upon yourself to enlighten me as to my duty, and declare that you will regard it as an act of unfriendliness towards you if I do not commit an act of injustice towards another, I have no reply to make."

Thereupon Adolphus turned on his heel and walked out of the shop.

Miles was still sitting on the box, holding his hands clasped on the leather apron over his knee, and looking at his dangling boot, plunged in profound melancholy, when Will came back. The young man's face was full of anxious foreboding.

"Is it a rupture?" he said.

"It looks like it," Miles answered, and in a few words related what had taken place.

"Why must I always be getting myself or others into trouble?" Will exclaimed bitterly. "I'd rather never have

come into your shop than that you and Mr. Daskill should quarrel. I'd rather leave it this moment — and I will!"

"No, no! you won't do any such thing," Mr. Fenway answered kindly. "Some of your remarks the other night were indiscreet. But I don't hold you to blame. What you said was all true enough, no doubt, though I was sorry, for one thing, that you should have undertaken to tell how Tibbetts and Tompkins came by their stock, without knowing more about it."

"I don't know why I did," said Will; "but the conviction came to me so clear and strong I could n't help uttering it. I seemed to look into the minds of those two men and see the whole transaction."

He was rapt in a silent and abstracted mood for a minute or so. Then he said, impressively, —

"I spoke of taking myself away to end this trouble. But my going would not end it, as my being here did not cause it. In the very nature of things, it was inevitable. And more is to come. Instead of going away in order to be of service to you, I am to be of service to you by staying here."

"I believe that," said Miles, still in deep melancholy. And he added with a sigh, "Poor Marian! I would n't mind if it was n't for her."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HOW THE HEAD CLERK'S CRAVAT GOT AWRY.

THE two men were still conversing when Mr. Emmons, from the store, entered, — literally rushed in, — looking pale and excited. Mr. Fenway gave a start of unpleasant surprise, expecting some belligerent message from his son-in-law. William, who, since his dismissal from the store, had never spoken with the head clerk, turned and faced him with a kindly, inquiring glance. The man could hardly speak for passion. His heart beat in his voice as he breathlessly demanded, —

“Will you step over to the store?”

“I? What for?” said Will.

“To oblige me — to do me justice,” replied the trembling visitor.

“In what way?” asked Will. “I am not aware that I ever did you injustice. On the contrary, I have a pretty clear recollection of having once suffered injustice at your hands.”

“William,” said Emmons, leaning on the desk, and mechanically fingering a paper-weight with shaking digits, “you were not treated right. But I could n’t help it. I had positive orders from Mr. Daskill to discharge you in his absence. I was to make your lameness a pretext, if no better could be invented. You saw through it; and I was willing you should,” the man went on, talking very glibly now that he had got his breath. “He’s an unscrupulous man, and a perfect despot. I beg your pardon, Mr. Fenway,” said poor Emmons, at sight

of Miles on the box, having at first quite overlooked him in his excitement.

"There's no occasion," Mr. Fenway answered dryly. "You need n't spoil a story for relation's sake. I'm glad, for one, to have some things explained."

"I don't mean to say anything disrespectful of Mr. Daskill," Emmons resumed, with a relapse into his constitutional timidity, out of which his passion had temporarily hurried him, "but his conduct is sometimes very arbitrary — unreasonable — singular, to say the least," he added, trimming his phrase for the father-in-law market. "He has treated me often in a way which human flesh and blood could hardly endure. I don't say but that he is a gentleman in his dress and manners, and a very remarkable man in other things; but when he uses language which implies that his head clerk is a confirmed idiot and damned fool, you will agree with me that it is what few head clerks could stand."

"I should say so," replied Miles, without a trace of humor or sarcasm in his earnest look and frank, emphatic tone. "Few besides you, Mr. Emmons."

"I have stood it, and almost bit my tongue off at times to keep from returning him as good as he gave. But just now, — not twenty minutes ago, — when he came into the counting-room in one of his worst moods, and took me by the throat, — yes, sir, actually throttled me!" — the head clerk showed his necktie still awry, bearing testimony to the unpleasant circumstance, — "and called me an infernal traitor, it was too much! it was too much! I had to answer back."

"What did you say?"

"I told him he — he — was mistaken."

"That was strong language," said Miles.

"It was bold language to use to a man like Mr. Daskill," said the white and trembling Emmons. "And I further

requested him not to do me a personal injury. Then, as he thrust me to the wall, I informed him that I should certainly look to the law for redress, if he did n't desist. I also avowed my intention to yell. He unhanded me; but he was still violent in his language, giving the lie to every word I said. Fearing he was about to get me in a corner again, — for I could see another fit of fury coming on, — I took my hat and ran out. I suppose I have lost the place," the head clerk concluded dejectedly.

"No great loss, I should say," replied William. "I did n't envy you when I left the store and you remained. What is it I can do for you now?"

"Step over and tell Mr. Daskill you did n't get from me your information as to how Tibbetts and Tompkins bought their stock."

"Who says I did?"

"He does. That's the trouble. He accuses me of overhauling his private papers and looking up the Tibbetts and Tompkins notes. He says the matter was a secret between him and them; they have never divulged it, and they felt aggrieved, thinking he had. And now, as I am the only person besides himself who has access to the safe, he accuses me. I am a spy, a traitor, an ingrate, and I can't remember what else. It will be a great satisfaction to me to know, and to have him know, just how you did get your information."

"It was n't information. Call it a good guess. I knew how such services were sometimes bought, and I saw it in the men's eyes. I would go over and tell Mr. Daskill so, if I thought it would do you any good. But he would be all the more disturbed to find that you have been to me, and that it is he, after all, who has given away his secret."

"Then what had I better do?" the man anxiously inquired.

"That depends. If you think more of your manhood than of weeks' wages, wade to the eyelids through seas of poverty

before you go back into that store. But if you care more for your place — ”

“I can't very well afford to lose my place,” murmured the miserable head clerk, retying his cravat.

“Then,” said Will with a smile, “it is very simple. Wait till he has had time to get over his anger and reflect on the imprudence of breaking with a man who has been I don't know how deep in his confidence ; then go back to your duties just as if nothing had happened, and make the best compromise between your manhood and your weeks' wages you can,” he added, giving the head clerk a significant light tap on the shoulder.

“I thank you very much,” said Emmons humbly. “And can I depend?” — he turned appealingly to Miles. “If he should learn that I have been here and spoken so freely, he would n't be able to make allowance for the exciting circumstances.”

“He will not know it from me,” said Mr. Fenway. “I am not sorry you came, — for the satisfaction of my own mind on certain points. But I sha'n't be in a hurry to tell of it.”

“I'm very grateful, I'm sure ! And I suppose” — the creature cringed to William — “I may rely on you?”

“I can make no promises,” Will answered, looking sternly down upon him, “except to do nothing but what seems to me right and just.”

The head clerk gave a finishing touch to his collar and cravat, and with superfluous thanks and apologies withdrew.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A STORM COMING ON.

"WELL!" said Miles Fenway, after a brief interval of reflection, rising from the box with a cheerful and resolute look; "we've had enough of that subject: now to business. Who is going over to look at Stevenson's lot of wood this afternoon, you or I?"

"I think the best judge of standing timber ought to go," replied Will.

"You are just as good a judge as I am, and you can get away from the shop better than I can to-day. You needn't decide anything; but just go over and examine the lot, — the size of the trees, whether they appear sound and healthy, the straightness and cleanness of the stems, the height of the limbs from the ground, — just look at those points particularly with an eye to fork-handles. I'd like to have the matter attended to to-day, for it looks to me as if we were going to have a big storm, and the roads may be full of drifts to-morrow. Start early, take either horse, and, as the boy said about the two roads, you'll wish you had taken the other," Miles concluded, with a dash of his habitual humor.

Will accepted the commission, and went home to dinner. Then things at the shop detained him, and the afternoon was well advanced before he was ready to start; but at last he got away.

Hard at work with the men, Miles Fenway tried to forget the subject which had troubled him in the morning. But he had not, after all, heard the last of it for that day. Towards

night old Carolus hobbled in on his three props. Miles turned from the forge, and looked down upon the dwarf in giant's mantle, who planted his hickory prop firmly, ran his eyes up the framework of the real giant and squeaked out in a voice pitched to be heard above the clatter of trip-hammers,—

“Miles Fenway, I want my money!”

This was a rather startling salutation, under the circumstances. In spite of his best endeavors to forget it, Miles had been thinking intently of his last interview with his son-in-law, and of the evil consequences that might result from it. He was wondering what he could do, for Marian's sake, to heal the breach, when here was presented a fine prospect for widening it; for, would it not look as if he were actuated by motives of resentment or suspicion, if he should now, so soon after their quarrel, call on Adolphus for the money which he had borrowed for him? He pushed the long-cloaked, shambling figure before him into the little office, and shut the door.

“Why didn't you ask for you money when it was due?”

“I did n't want it.”

“Neither do you want it now.”

“That's my business,” said the old man sharply.

“Very well,” said Miles. “I suppose you can have it as well one time as another. I'm only sorry you did n't call for it when the note fell due, for Mr. Daskill came and offered it to me then.”

“Fool you did n't take it,” the old man retorted with a harsh, sardonic laugh. “If he was a son-in-law of mine, and offered me money due, grass would n't grow many inches while I was hesitating about taking it. Give me your check?” And the old man took Mr. Fenway's note from an old, greasy pocket-book.

“I shall have to get Mr. Daskill's check first. Will you go over to the store with me!”

"No, by Jehoshaphat! I don't know Daskill. His check is your business. Your check is my business. Shall I have it? Or shall I put your note into the bank for collection?"

"You need n't do that. The note is going to be paid, Mr. Carolus. I thought I would like to have Mr. Daskill know from you that it is you, and not I, who want the money."

"Very well. You can tell him. He'll take your word for it. I have n't the pleasure of the man's acquaintance. He would n't believe me."

Miles grinned with grim humor.

"I think almost any man who hears you say you must have money that is owing you would give you credit for meaning what you say. It's after business hours, and I can't promise to do anything for you to-night. But come in the morning, and I've no doubt but you'll have your four thousand dollars."

"Very well!" The old man jerked himself around to the door, but paused before opening it. "Miles Fenway, we've always been friends. We take plain things from each other; you're plain with me, I'm plain with you. Now hark'e! Mr. What's-his-name is your son-in-law, not mine. If you trust him, it's your business, not mine. But take a hint from an old man. Extravagance is the devil. Mr. What's-his-name is extravagant. He don't attend to his business. He rides around too much. Leaves everything to his clerks. D—n the clerks! Has too many irons in the fire; some will burn his fingers, while the rest get cold. He may blunder into a fortune, but he's more likely to blunder out of what he's got. Goldfinch & Co. have washed their hands of him."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean he is no longer a partner. They keep the Buffalo business; he takes the business here. He's too deep in speculations for them. That for his speculations!" The old man snapped his fingers with a cackle of contempt. "Bubbling

Run has had its run. No stock selling. Through the sand rock, and no ile yet; only a little trickle. Wetherspun offered me his shares for fifty-five to-day. Tibbetts and Tompkins don't dare show their faces. Everybody who has anything to do with the concern is losing credit. You are losing credit. That's why I want my money. I tell ye, Bubbling Run has bubbled out. Miles Fenway, I'll take your check in the morning."

As old Carolus went out, a gust of snow blew in. Miles shut the door after him, and leaned on the desk. Something had taken his breath away. After a little reflection he put on his hat and coat, and walked over to the store. Mr. Daskill had gone home. So he was informed by Mr. Emmons, who was at his post again, but looking sallow and anxious, and who whispered, "He is still in an unsettled state of mind," aside to Mr. Fenway.

Miles turned back to the shop, wondering, as he bent his tall form against the wintry gusts, whether he had better go and see Marian and talk with Mr. Daskill that evening, notwithstanding the storm, and whether Will was on his way home.

Will had in the mean time made an examination of the standing timber, and was about starting to return when cries for help from a neighboring wood-lot reached his ears, and he tramped over through the snow with Farmer Johnson to see what was the matter. The cries grew louder as they advanced, but they could see nobody in the woods, until, reaching the very spot from which they issued, they came upon a man lying in a little hollow of the snow, with both legs under a heavy beech log. He had been trying to pry an end of the stick upon a rest he had placed for it, when, his hand-spike slipping, he was thrown down, and the log rolled back upon him. Will and the farmer made haste to take him out of his trap, and, finding that he could not walk, carried him, groaning with

pain, to Will's cutter in the road. Then Will could do no less than convey him to his home, which was two miles away, and drive for the nearest doctor, a mile farther. All this took time. Finally, it was impossible to resist the urgent solicitation of the wood-chopper's grateful family that he would take a cup of tea, and give his horse a rest before starting for home. As it was now evening, and the fury of the storm was to be faced, Will was not averse to fortifying himself and his beast for the homeward trip by accepting his hospitality. But he declined an invitation to spend the night there, and at last, with his two extra miles to drive, set out to return.

It was near the season of the shortest days. The wild night had pounced down upon the world with tempestuous wings more than an hour since. It would have been dark but for the snow that covered the earth and filled the air. Muffled to the nose, with the storm spitting and howling in his face, Will could scarcely see the dim outline of the horse a yard or two before him, and could not hear the tramp of hoofs in the soft track. Sometimes the gale was so fierce and the snow came so fast that it was difficult even to breathe.

A well-trodden track had been formed in the earlier falls of snow, but it was filling rapidly with drifts. The horse had set off at a brisk rate, but travel grew more and more toilsome as he went on, so that the fast trot soon became a slow one, then slackened to a floundering walk. Now and then there was a snow-bank that had to be wallowed through. In one such, Will, who had left everything to the sagacity of the horse, became aware of a sleigh going in the opposite direction, so near that the whiffletrees grazed his cutter. Quite independently of the drivers, the horse and the heavy team had turned out for each other. Once or twice the cutter came near upsetting in the drifts.

Passing a wayside tavern, the weary animal turned up to it, and Will would have been tempted to take the hint and put

into that port for refuge, if the thought of his mother's anxiety on his account, and the probability of the roads being completely blocked in the morning, and perhaps for a day or two, had not prompted him to go on. Waybrook village was only a mile and a half farther; but what a mile and a half!

"Come, old fellow! we must travel while we can," said Will, urging the poor beast away from that inviting haven.

On went horse and cutter, ploughing through the drifts; while the driver, facing the fury of the snow-laden blast, scarcely heeded its violence, but sat rapt in his own thoughts, in the awful solitude of the night and storm.

CHAPTER XL.

MARIAN LEARNS THE TRUTH.

THE ten days having elapsed which she had given Mrs. Chilgrove to find another abode, Julia Farnell passed the Folly one afternoon, and, glancing up at a window, was favored by that lady with a wicked smile.

She went home in great trouble of mind, feeling that her only hope of a peaceful solution of the difficulty had failed, and dreading to take the next decisive step. The cold defiance in the face behind the pane did not encourage her to seek a second interview. And still she could not resolve upon the stroke which would destroy poor Marian's peace. Should she go to Marian's mother with the dreadful secret? Mrs. Fenway was almost the last person she would have thought it wise to consult. Should she go to Lottie? Lottie was kind-hearted and faithful, but what could she do? There was one individual for whose sympathy and advice she ardently longed. That was William Rayburn.

But Will, since his return home, had shown little inclination to renew his intercourse with the Farnells; Julia had even thought that he sometimes tried to avoid her. Not a word from him regarding those French lessons. Must she think that it was only his love for Marian which had once drawn him to Marian's friend? That love lost, was she nothing more to him? She would not therefore approach him again on the subject of Marian's happiness; for might it not seem that she was eager to draw him back by the only tie which had existed between them?

So she saw Will pass and repass, and sometimes spoke with him casually on the street; and all the while she carried in her heart the burning secret which she durst not impart to another, and could not have the sole, sad comfort of sharing with him. There was then but one person to whom she could appeal, before going to Marian herself. That was Mr. Daskill.

One afternoon as she was walking down the declivity below the Folly, on her way home from the seminary, she met Adolphus walking up. He was usually in his buggy, driving fast, when she saw him on the street; and, though he always saluted her with ostentatious courtesy, she had not been able to catch his eye with a glance which would check his speed. Now, however, the opportunity she waited for had come.

"How is it," said Adolphus, lifting his hat, "that I am always coming down the hill when you are going up, and going up when your are coming down? Am I never to have the pleasure of accompanying you?"

"Not unless you turn and go my way," replied Julia, pausing, and compelling him to come to a full stop.

"I've often thought of doing that when I have been driving. It would give me great pleasure sometimes to carry you home. But you declined my proposal to do so once."

"I have lately wished you would renew it," said Julia, answering him pleasantly, but with a serious look out of her liquid, sincere eyes. "For I have wanted to speak to you, Mr. Daskill."

Into the thick-complexioned features of the polished man of the world shot the dark-purple flush which we know, as he replied, still with an effort at gayety, —

"You do me great honor, Miss Farnell. Will you permit me to walk with you?"

"I thank you, — no, Mr. Daskill. What I have to say will not keep us long. I think it very likely that you know I called to see Mrs. Chilgrove a short time since."

Adolphus called up all the easy frankness of his gentlemanly manner, and answered, with very little appearance of concern, except as to the aforesaid flush, —

“She spoke of a conversation she had with you.”

“And of the contents of a letter which I showed her?” said Julia, grave and pale.

“Yes, she spoke of the letter. And I am very glad,” said Adolphus, in his large, liberal way, “to correct certain false impressions which I suppose must have remained with you. Mrs. Chilgrove, I find, is a very peculiar woman; singularly good-hearted when her heart is appealed to, but perversely — I might almost say recklessly — obstinate when she is approached with anything that seems like a menace. She would not deign to explain matters to you, but left you to think the worst of her.”

“What else could I think?” said Julia. “Were not the statements in the letter correct?”

“Correct enough in the mere outline of facts; but wholly incorrect as to the inferences drawn from them.”

“You do not mean to deny that you knew Mrs. Chilgrove-Lafitte long before your first meeting with Marian?”

“Oh, no. She had charge of my unfortunate son, and of course I had frequent occasion to visit her. That gave rise to some slanders. That is really all there was about it, Miss Farnell,” said Adolphus, with a smile of beautiful candor.

“Then why did you so carefully conceal from Marian and her friends the fact of your previous acquaintance with her?”

“There had been a misunderstanding between us, and I had thought it best to remove my son from her charge. Then, when we chanced to meet afterwards, we were both angry, and did not care to recognize each other. That was a mistake, which led to more serious ones. We met again, by accident, and there were mutual explanations; but still, remembering the old slanders, I did n't think it best that our

friendship should be renewed. And it never would have been, but for my son. No other person ever had so good an influence over him, or understood the care of him so well as she; and when Marian proposed to take her for a companion, I said to myself, 'Why not?' The only awkwardness lay in the fact that I had not acknowledged our previous acquaintance. I ought to have done it then. But, Miss Farnell, we are not always wise; and I fell into an error. Things have now gone so far that I think Marian had better remain in ignorance, but if you think otherwise, — why, then, I can only make to her the explanation I have now made to you."

"Mr. Daskill," said Julia, earnest almost to tearfulness, "I think, even at this late hour, Marian ought to know all. That is, unless *you* see fit to have Mrs. Chilgrove quietly retire. In that case I will gladly leave you to settle the matter with Marian and your own conscience."

"Well, perhaps you are right," replied Adolphus, appearing to yield. "I should n't hesitate about it for a moment, but for my son's sake. She will be an irreparable loss to him. You know what Marian is, — so wholly unfitted even to be brought into contact with such a case as his. If *she* only had *your* spirit, Miss Farnell!"

Julia felt compelled to answer this compliment with the ungraciousness of downright truth.

"Marian is like nobody but herself, — affectionate, delicate, sensitive, but not fitted either by constitution or discipline for the rude tasks of life. You must have known that before you married her. I hoped she had found a man who would prize her for what she is, and care for her as we do for the tenderest flowers; and I was surprised when I learned that she was daily obliged to witness the paroxysms of your unfortunate son. I admire your devotion to him. It is partly that, I suppose, which may have made you unjust to her; for it must be hard for you to conceive of another's having so different a

feeling for him. I have shrunk from speaking of this to you, and now I trust that you will pardon me."

"Certainly, and I thank you besides," said Adolphus, in his turbid flush again, but courteous and conciliatory. "I have n't meant to be unjust to her, and it has been for her sake, as well as for my son's, that I have wished to place some such person between them as the woman you think so objectionable. What am I to do? You see, Miss Farnell, I find myself in a difficult position."

"Is, then, Mrs. Chilgrove the only fit person in the world to take charge of your son?"

"Oh, no; but fit persons for that place are not easy to be had. I know one about whom there would be no question, — a friend of Marian's, and a lady of great spirit combined with perfect gentleness. But I suppose it would be quite impossible to get her."

"Perhaps not. What is her name?"

"Miss Farnell."

Julia looked up quickly, and saw the Daskill eyes beaming upon her with ardent admiration.

"You are right," she answered coldly. "It will be as impossible to get her as it is, under the circumstances, for you to keep Mrs. Chilgrove. But some other arrangement, suitable for all parties, can no doubt be made, and can I rely upon you to make it as early as possible?"

"Assuredly. I quite agree with you, Miss Farnell, and will do what I can. Meanwhile I trust I can rely upon your patience and discretion."

"Upon my discretion — yes. Upon my patience, too, as far as patience is a virtue. But I am altogether in earnest in this matter, Mr. Daskill."

"Oh, yes, I understand that. And I will do you the justice to say that your behavior in it has been admirable. I shall leave you nothing to complain of, only give me a little time."

So saying, Adolphus lifted his hat with a smile of perfect politeness, then turned and walked on, with a look of baffled rage in his livid face.

Julia had all the while a strong suspicion that he was trying to manage her and gain time, and it was confirmed when, passing the house again after another ten days had elapsed, she was once more greeted, from behind the plate-glass pane, by Mrs. Chilgrove's placid smile.

During the interval, Mr. Daskill had carefully avoided meeting Miss Farnell on the street, and at last she became aware that he had gone out of town, — gone, and left Mrs. Chilgrove with Marian. There was then but one thing left for her to do. One afternoon she rang at the door of the Folly and asked for Marian.

The young wife's beautiful face was wan with misery when she went into the room where Julia was waiting, at sight of whose gentle countenance, full of sympathy and pity, she became suddenly convulsed with sobs.

Julia led her to the sofa, and, holding her in her embrace, said, as a mother might have spoken to a child, —

"There, there, dear Marian, tell me all about it."

"That woman! that woman!" said Marian, starting up.

"Mrs. Chilgrove? What about her?"

"I can't tell. I don't know. But she is terrible! she is terrible! Without a word or an act which I can really complain of, she is destroying my happiness, my life. She almost makes me believe in sorcery and the evil eye."

"You must get rid of her."

"I cannot. That is the trouble. She is mistress in this house. Mrs. Downey is gone. Oh, I wish I could go too!"

"Perhaps you had better go, dear child."

"Where? Not home to my mother's! I could never do that."

"Then come to me. My home, as long as I have one, will

always be yours, Marian. But if you can only be brave and strong for once, you may stay here, and that woman shall go."

"You don't know, Julia. What can I do? My husband thinks she is indispensable to Clarence, and unless I can speak of some special fault of hers, something a man can understand, my objection to her must seem wholly unreasonable. She treats me pleasantly. She is always polite and smiling, but she is never sincere with me. There is something in her spirit that holds me in utter contempt. She has gained a complete ascendancy over Mr. Daskill; he sees only her, hears only her; he has scarcely a look or a word for me."

"How long has this been?"

"Almost from the first, only I would not for a long while believe it. She always had a way of making me feel my inferiority, especially in *his* presence. Then all at once, though she was still outwardly smiling, I felt a sort of defiance in her, as if she was aware of her supremacy here, and meant to keep it. I noticed it first one evening after I had brought Will Rayburn over from the railroad. I told her what I had done, just as I had told her other things about him, and it seemed to me that I had given her a conscious power over me."

"It was n't altogether that; I will tell you by and by what it was."

"Oh, I shall be so glad if you will tell me it was not what I feared! I have so dreaded lest she should have betrayed me to him. They had a long talk that evening. It seemed to me something terrible had happened, — something terrible to me. He told me he was in Clarence's room. That is always the pretence when I am left alone, and they pass their evenings together. But I know! he was in Mrs. Chilgrove's room. He was there till after midnight. The next day she was like a queen, cold and cruel-hearted, but smiling still, and making me feel how useless it would be for me to attempt to remove

her. O Julia, can you help me? What was it that caused the change? What was the trouble?"

"Marian, when you are prepared to hear it, I am going to tell you something you have not yet suspected. I hope it will give you strength to act a woman's part."

"You frighten me!" said Marian, with startled eyes and white lips.

"Yes, and I am going to give you great pain. I have tried to avoid it. I have appealed to your husband. I have talked with Mrs. Chilgrove. I came to her first; it was that afternoon in your absence. She gave me a partial promise that she would go. He afterwards did the same. But here she is still. Now you shall know all."

"I am ready. Tell me!" said Marian, pale and scared.

"You remember, the day you brought her home, you met me walking with a gentleman? It was Mr. Rocknam, Priscilla's father, a person of great moral worth, as far as I can learn. He recognized Mrs. Chilgrove, and from him I have learned some extraordinary things."

Julia paused. Marian's face was full of intense, anxious questioning, — her lips apart, her frightened eyes fixed, her breath suspended.

"The most extraordinary is — that your husband and Mrs. Chilgrove are old and very intimate friends."

Marian appeared relieved. She actually smiled.

"Julia! that's impossible!"

"It does seem incredible. But neither he nor she denies it. You have been deceived. Pretending to be strangers, they have been renewing an old and shameful intrigue under your very eyes. If you wish to know some particulars about it, I have letters which I will show you. I will tell you briefly what they state in detail. This woman formerly had the care of Clarence at Valley Springs, where Mr. Daskill used to go out regularly and spend his Sundays with them. She confi-

dentially informed her landlady that she was married to him, but that the marriage could not safely be made public until she had secured from another husband — a Canadian named Lafitte, from whom she claimed that she had been divorced — an alimony, which had been granted her, but which he contested in the courts. By such pretences she hoodwinked the landlady, who refused to believe a word that was spoken against her, even after her intrigues with other men in Mr. Daskill's absence had become notorious. Then it transpired — for such a man cannot hide his light under a bushel — that Mr. Daskill was a well-known Buffalo man, and that he had a wife living. It seems that she was an invalid, and that she died about this time. Then the landlady was told that the wife had been the real obstacle in the way of the marriage, which was to take place as soon as a decent regard for public opinion would permit. It was still put off, however, until at length Mr. Daskill, for good cause, it seems, became jealous of the doctor who attended Clarence, quarrelled with Mrs. Lafitte, and left her, taking his son away with him, after a rather terrific scene, according to the landlady's account. In her anger, Mrs. Lafitte sent after him all the money he had left with her; but it did not even have the effect of bringing him to communicate with her again."

To all this Marian listened with a face which might be called deathlike, but that the faces of the dead have neither anguish nor despair, but happily are at peace. Julia went on.

"The doctor involved in the scandal is a friend of my friend, Mr. Rocknam. You will see a letter from him, if you wish to read it. Though an amiable and high-minded man, he was for a time infatuated with this woman, but his eyes were opened at last. She had reached the end of her career in a place where her real character had become so well known; and all at once she disappeared, leaving her trunk and nearly all her clothing, which her landlady detained for

arrears of debt. If there is more you want to know, you will perhaps find it in these letters. Now, Marian, rise up in your womanhood !”

Poor Marian did not look as if she would ever rise up again, in any sense.

“ Oh, if I could die this moment !” she moaned. “ Why did I ever see this man ? ”

“ We cannot tell that. Let us hope that some light may come out of what seems now so dark. And there will, Marian, if you have courage, and patience, and faith.”

“ But I am so weak ! How can I strive with this woman ? ”

“ Do not attempt it. You are no match for her scorn and hate.”

“ Then what shall I do ? ”

“ If you love your husband, — if your heart still clings to him — ”

“ Oh, if I could have him as he was, alone ! We might have been happy. It is this woman who has made all the trouble.”

“ If you feel so, then you can forgive much. Wait till he returns.”

“ He has already returned. He came last night.”

“ So much the better : it will be sooner over. Go to him ; appeal to his love for you. Do all in gentleness, but let him understand that either she or you must leave the house at once, — no delay. Perhaps it will be better for you to go home, and let him seek you there for an explanation.”

“ I could n't go home and have my mother know ! ”

“ Then come with me.”

“ I dare not ! ” said the miserable girl. “ What will the world say if I am separated from him ? ”

“ Poor child ! can you think of that ? I wish you would think only of your own womanhood — only of what is right. That is your weapon of power in this trouble : fear of what people will say, fear of losing some worldly advantage, — that

is your weakness. Would you remain, and witness her triumph?"

"Oh! oh!" Marian cried out, as if pierced with sharp pain. "How can I endure more than I have endured. I would n't confess it even to myself, but I have had the most horrible suspicions, I have been madly jealous. The evenings, the nights, he has pretended to spend in Clarence's room, — I see it all now! Can I pass such another night and live? Julia, if you love me, give me some quick poison, that I may end it all, and be at rest!"

"You a Christian woman, and say that! No, you are to live, Marian. There is comfort yet in store for you; there are still those who love you."

"Do you think so?" said Marian, with a faint gleam of hope. "Julia, how much you talk like — like William. I have thought I would give anything in the world if I could tell *him* everything, and get his advice. But that is out of the question. And I know he would say just what you say. I wish you could stay with me!"

"I would if I could, dear. But see! it is beginning to snow, and I must hasten home. My poor father complains bitterly of my neglecting him. Shall I leave you these letters?"

With a look of shrinking horror Marian took them, folded them in her handkerchief, and put them in her pocket.

"Is she in the house?" asked Julia, as she was going.

"Yes; and she knows you are here talking with me."

It is, perhaps, well that she does: the crisis will be hastened."

And Julia, taking sad leave of her friend, went out into the rising storm.

CHAPTER XLI.

UNDER THE WHITE DOVE.

It was some time before Marian could summon courage to look at the letters. She locked herself in her room, she walked the floor, she gazed from the window, and watched the driving snow and the wild, on-coming night; she wept, she even prayed. At last she sat down with the letters in her lap, in the fading daylight, and read, — rather, began to read: get through them she could not. Suddenly she flung them from her, with a cry of horror, and sprang up.

“O merciful Providence!” she exclaimed, “what am I here for? Why did n’t I go with Julia? I will go now!”

She rushed to the window. Scarcely the trees in the yard were visible in the ghostly whiteness, amid the dim, snow-laden gusts. She looked down, and tried to see the shovelled path to the street, and beheld a light sleigh turn into the yard. She drew back, affrighted. Her husband had come home from the store.

It did not seem to her now that she could ever face him again. To go down and sit at the tea-table was impossible. There was one resort; her brain was throbbing, she was ill: she would go to bed. The servant came in answer to her ring.

“I have a headache,” she said. “I shall not go down.”

“Shall I bring you up something?”

“No, I thank you.” Even in her anguish she spoke gently and sweetly to the girl. “All I want is rest — to be left alone.”

Then she waited. Would he come to her? She heard his footstep on the stairs, but it did not stop at her door.

"He has gone to her!" she said, and hid her face.

What an age of anxiety was the next hour! It was growing dark in the chamber. When she looked out, she saw only the whirling snow-cloud sweep past the window. The tempest buffeted the house, rattled the blinds, screamed about the cornices, hurled volleys of driven flakes, fine as sleet, against the pane. No other sound. And so the night came on.

There she lay, and thought, and thought. The days of her bright girlhood; the times when she used to pass this very house, and wonder what could prevent its future occupants from being altogether happy, and would she ever be so blessed? the rosy mists of hope and passion that veiled the future to her young eyes, her mother's false teachings and artful schemes to secure for her a brilliant marriage, the religion she once thought she experienced, — how unreal it seemed to her now! the love, oh, the pure, beautiful love which was once hers, but which she cast away, — for what? — her first meeting with Adolphus, the ardor of the new wooer, the brief triumph, the short-lived happiness, the present fear and horror, the loathsomeness of life, — all this throbbed through her brain.

Footsteps again, a hand on the latch. She buried herself in the bedclothes. Somebody entered the room; and she heard a voice — his voice — ordering a light to be brought. In the interval of waiting, he walked impatiently to and fro, — now approaching the bed where she lay shrinking and trembling, then the footsteps receding into the hall.

At last all was still in the room, only a fitful rustling of paper was heard. Her suspense became intolerable; she drew aside the bedclothes, and looked forth, like some scared, wild creature from its hiding-place. There was a

lamp on the table between the windows; and there, in the full light, sat her husband, with his glasses on, reading the letters which he had picked up from the floor. To the eyes of the suffering and timid wife, his countenance was terrible in its wrath and gloom. She looked at him but for a moment. Then once more she covered her face and lay still.

After a while she heard him come over to her, place a chair by the bedside, and sit down.

"Marian," he said calmly, "please let me see your face: I want to talk with you."

She obediently threw off the covering, but did not look at him; she looked up at the holy symbol of the sculptured white dove over the marriage-bed. He gazed fixedly for a moment at the pale, panting thing that was his wife, then said, in tones still outwardly calm, but portentous with deep passion, —

"Are you really sick?"

"O Adolphus," she replied, "I am sick to death! I wish I could die! Why did n't you kill me sooner than —" Her voice ended in a shudder.

"Sooner than what? Speak it out! Let's come to an understanding."

"How could you deceive me so?" she broke forth; and went off into a paroxysm of sobbing.

"Well," said Adolphus, after a pause, — and she checked her sobs to hear, — "it is fine for *you* to accuse *me* of deception."

"Why, I have never deceived you, Adolphus!"

"Never? Think a moment. Don't be so unreasonable as to forget nobody's faults but your own. I courted you in perfectly good faith, — I gave you my whole heart; while you won me by a course of duplicity."

"I?"

"You and your mother. You began it that very night when I first saw you. You were rushing into the arms of your lover when I came to the door. Expecting your brother-in-law! and your kiss was for him, was it? I have never known of your greeting Mr. Lorkins in that affectionate way. Your innocent face and your mother's simpering lies were enough to impose upon anybody; but I found afterwards who was coming to the house."

"Oh! but there was never anything wrong between him and me!"

"Nothing wrong? Then I'd like to know what your notion is of a woman's modesty and truth. Whatever my previous life may have been, I was a free man when I offered myself to you. I had n't been spotless; I did n't claim to be; no man of my years and temperament can claim that. But I was bound to no woman. On the other hand, the very day I declared myself, and you encouraged my suit, assuring me that your hand was free, — that very day, that very hour, you had pledged it to another. His kisses were warm on your lips. Before you could come out to me, you had to stop in your sister's room, and smooth your hair and collar, rumpled by his caresses. Now you talk of my deception!"

This was all too true. Marian cowered, and could not say a word. She remembered who was in the room at the time and helped her arrange her collar and hair. She remembered, too, her own foolish confidences to the woman who had certainly betrayed her.

"Then, do you think if I had known how you went over to the railroad one morning, to catch him as he was going away from you, do you think I would have meekly taken up with his leavings? Why, you and your mother could never tell me the truth! When she stole your key to get into the house one night, and lost it, and it was handed to me the next morning, — what a mystery you both made of it! You seem to have

lived in an atmosphere of deceit ; anything was easier to you than to speak the truth."

As she had never related the adventure of the key to any one, and was not aware of her mother's having taken Mrs. Chilgrove into her confidence, Marian could not conceive how Adolphus had obtained his information. Still she could not reply. She lay looking up through her tears at the white-winged symbol of peace and purity above the bed, and awaited his cruel words.

"This, you will say, was before marriage. What since? The very morning after we came back to this house I caught you in tears, and in your confusion you betrayed the not very complimentary fact to a new husband, that you were thinking of an old lover."

Then Marian turned and looked at him and tried to speak ; but he went on.

"And don't I know that you have been intriguing with him since? You could n't rest until you got him back here and in your father's shop. Your influence in his favor is greater than all other interests against him. He is making public speeches, abusing me and my friends and my speculation."

"I don't believe it is so !" cried Marian.

"Why, it's the town talk. Your father acknowledges that he has heard him ; more than that, that he has indorsed him. And when I told him to-day that I should regard it as an act of unfriendliness if he kept in his employ a person who is my open and malignant enemy, what do you think? That he acted like my wife's father, and complied with my reasonable requirement? No. He told me virtually to go about my business."

Marian was roused to reply.

"I don't believe he told you that. It does n't sound like my father. My father is the most just man that ever lived. He has not been influenced by me. I have not intrigued for anybody. I know nothing about the things you complain of.

Only I am sure of this, that my father would not say or do anything that he did not think right."

"Very well. Stand up for him. I should expect you would, since he takes your lover's part. My business, my reputation, my interests are of no account."

"Since you feel that way," replied Marian, gaining courage with speech, "I think I had better go home. I ought to have gone as soon as I learned those dreadful things about you and Mrs. Lafitte. But I waited — I hoped you would have some word of explanation, some promise for me, for I am young to have all my hopes of happiness blighted."

The pathos of this appeal did not touch Adolphus. His reply was cold and stern.

"If they are blighted, it is your own fault. The wife who wishes to keep her husband true must be true to him. When I found that I never had your heart, what could you expect?"

"You had my heart. I have been true to you. Adolphus, I have never wronged you by word or deed. I was weak, I was bewildered. I had n't the courage to tell you all, as I ought to have done; but I never meant to deceive you. I had been interested in William, but when I accepted you I had given him up. I was all yours,—or you might have made me so if you had cared for me, if you had been kind. And you might make me so still; for I have loved you—I want to love you now and be at peace. I can forgive anything. I can bury the past, let it all go, if you will begin anew with me, and try to make our married life what it ought to be."

"I should be very glad to, Marian, not only for your sake and mine, but to avoid public scandal. That is always the devil in such cases,—especially to the woman. A man need n't mind it so much."

"I don't need to be told that I am the one to suffer most, if we are separated. There will be nothing left for me in life,

but you can go on, with your head high, as men do, and forget your domestic troubles in the excitement of business and in the society of other women. That is the way of the world. But it is n't simply because I should be the greatest loser that I dread to leave you: I want love. O Adolphus, I want peace and good-will!"

"Very well. You can have them. I do not tell you to go. I very much prefer that you should stay."

"And will you do me justice?" Marian implored, trying to gather hope from his words, cold and hard as the heart seemed that uttered them.

"In what way?"

"There is but one way, dear husband. You cannot keep her in this house."

"You mean Mrs. Chilgrove?"

"Mrs. Chilgrove — or Mrs. Lafitte. I mean the woman who has come between us and caused all our trouble, — that false, intriguing, dangerous, desperate woman, whom I was so foolish as to suppose that I chose for a companion, while I was being artfully led by you to take her into the house."

"Marian, you wrong me there," said Adolphus, in the old plausible way. "She was your own choice; if I consented to it, it was because I knew of no other woman in the world who could do so much for my son."

Marian was not convinced.

"She was my choice, as many other things have been my choice, when you have had your will in spite of me; just as the room we gave her was my choice."

"Don't you believe my word?" he demanded.

"I will not dispute it in that or in anything. I know what you will tell me. I will not waste words in accusations or complaints. All I ask is, that she shall go."

"But, Marian, don't you see? That is impossible."

Marian writhed at these words, so deadly to all her hopes.

"You say that!" she cried, glaring upon him with wild, despairing eyes. "Then I shall go!"

"No, Marian, you won't do anything so foolish and unreasonable."

"Who will prevent me?"

"Why, I will. I am your husband: I have the right to restrain you from committing any such insane act. But you will not compel me to do that when I explain to you how necessary it is for Mrs. Chilgrove to remain with Clarence."

"Let her take Clarence away to another house, to another town."

"That would n't suit you, either. I must visit my son. You would accuse me of visiting her. You would be miserable, and make me so. You've got to make up your mind, Marian, to let me have my way in this matter."

"And live under the same roof with her?"

"Certainly. Once get rid of your foolish prejudices, and content yourself with the place where you really belong, and we three can live harmoniously together."

"Do you mean it, Adolphus?"

"Most assuredly. If the old scandals break out or new ones come up, we can deny them, live them down. Society has unbounded toleration for people who live in fine houses and bear themselves with courage."

"Tell me then plainly, — do not put forward any pretence, but tell me at once, — not that she is necessary to Clarence, but that she is necessary to you."

"Very well. Have it so, if you like. It is time for us to understand each other."

"And I am to stay and see her take my place?"

"Oh, no, not your place. Her own place. I shall cherish you for all you are to me. She is something different. Whatever may be said of her, she is a woman of wonderful powers."

"Why did n't you marry her?"

"It is too late to ask that question."

"Perhaps not," said Marian, with something strangely calm and significant in her look and tone. "I feel that I shall not live very long. Then you can repair the error you made when you forsook a woman of such powers for a foolish child like me."

"Don't talk nonsense!" said Adolphus impatiently.

"I am talking most seriously. If this is not my death-bed, it is the death bed of my happiness. Adolphus, I give you up. Oh, if she were a pure and good woman, and you loved her truly, how willingly I would take myself out of your way, and leave nothing between you but a little mound of earth, which would be so little for you to step over! And that is all that is left for me to do, willingly or unwillingly. I can't survive this; I've no wish to survive it. What! live in the house with you and her, now that I know what I only suspected before? Endure that cold, triumphant smile of hers? Be a wife only in name, a dishonored wife, who is expected to live harmoniously with her husband and his — Oh! oh!"

And writhing again in the agony of that thought, Marian once more covered her face and closed her ears. Adolphus rose and left the room.

CHAPTER XLII.

OVERWHELMED.

MARIAN lay very still for a while, thinking only of death, and praying for it; but death is not a servant, to appear obediently at our bidding, and ease us of a weary load. Then all at once came the sharp, relentless thought that she must live, and strive, and suffer. What hope was there that he would do her right? She remembered how he had forestalled her accusations against him by bringing charges of unfaithfulness against her; and recalled his cool assumption that she could accustom herself to the shameful life he proposed, and find her place, and be content. His threat to use a husband's right to restrain her was still ringing in her ears. All his cruel words came back, and the memory of wrongs more terrible than words. She started up.

"He will prevent me from leaving this house," she said in a wild whisper. "He shall not! What do I care for the storm? It will be gentle and tender compared with him!"

She dressed herself in haste, choosing as far as practicable the garments she had brought with her into her husband's house. Her heavy suit of furs — his gift — she left lying in a chair, and put on her old camel's-hair shawl, with hood and veil. Habit was so strong with her that even at a time like this she had to turn and arrange her head-gear before the glass. She remembered that this was the same thick blue veil she had worn that morning when she went over in the coach to see Will for the last time before he started on his journey. What a scared and ghastly face looked out at her from under it now!

She had put on ample underclothing; and lastly, over her small, delicately booted feet she drew a pair of woollen stockings of extraordinary length and thickness. Little did Mrs. Wetherspun think when she gave her time and her best yarn (which she had since so often begrudged) to make the bride a handsome present, that it would be brought out and put to use for the first time on an occasion such as this.

Then, before drawing on her gloves, Marian pencilled a few words of farewell, and left them on the bureau. All the while she did not shed a tear, until, when she was ready to depart, turning to take a last look at the luxurious, lamp-lighted room, she remembered that it was her bridal-chamber. What hope and pride had entered it a few months before; what misery and despair were fleeing from it now! All was over; her dreams were gone, like the petals of a faded flower blown by ruthless gales; her life was bare and desolate. The pathos of her own situation brought some tears; but she drew the veil over them, closed the room behind her, listened for a moment, and then stole down the stairs.

When she opened the front door, she was met by such a volley of wind and snow as might have dismayed a stouter heart. She did indeed start back instinctively. But a desperate resolve possessed her, and her horror of the house urged her on. She closed the door carefully after her, and went forth into the night and storm.

The free course of the wind swept the snow from the brow of the hill; and, once in the street, she got along with no great hardship for a while, only the force of the tempest sometimes fairly hurling her back and depriving her of breath. But as she descended the slope the snow became deeper, until she found herself sinking in drifts. Still she kept on, stopping to rest now and then, turning her back to the blast, and gathering breath and strength for renewed efforts.

At every step, progress became more and more difficult.

If for a moment there was a lull, at the next a fierce gust swooped down upon her, beat her veil aside, and flapped in her face with furious wings. The snow engulfed and paralyzed her limbs. Her power to struggle was fast leaving her; and once when she stopped she sank down.

She did not think she could ever get up again. But now she began to dread the death for which she had prayed a little while before. There were houses farther on: could she reach them? or should she go back to the one she had left, and accept the shelter with the shame? She would soon be cut off even from that last resort; for the drifts closed up behind her, and her own tracks were almost immediately filled.

She rose, and actually turned back, after vainly attempting to face the gale. But she had not gone far when she became aware of strange obstructions under her feet. She felt them with her gloved hands. They were stones. She was floundering over an almost buried wayside wall. Which wall it was, on which side of it lay the road whence she had strayed, a little reflection might have taught her, had she not been by this time too much bewildered to reflect. When she finally got free of the stones, she was not on the side of the street, but of the fields.

More than once she sank down in the drifts as she struggled on, and at last she could not rise at all. She could only call for help. And call she did, with all the feeble might of her exhausted lungs. She could scarcely hear her own voice. It seemed as if her cries were caught up into a whirlwind, and answered by the roar of the storm.

She knew she was lost; and her final efforts had been spent in vain attempts to find once more the roadside wall; for, out of the track of travel, what hope was there of rescue? Sleights might pass within a few rods of her, and who would hear her calls?

She could see no prospect before her but to pass the night

buried in the snow ; and that she knew was death. So young, so delicately nurtured, so beloved by parents and friends, a dreadful death it seemed ! But she was powerless to struggle longer against it, and she became reconciled to it. In a sitting posture, with her back to the gale, she gathered her clothing closely about her, and bowed her face in her shawl. Who would find her there, stiff and cold ? Who would mourn for her ? Would her husband's heart be wrung ? He would give perhaps one tear to her memory, heave one sigh over her untimely fate, then cheerfully marry Mrs. Lafitte.

A fatal numbness was stealing over her when once she heard a faint sound of sleigh-bells. She roused herself, and screamed again — again. But her voice seemed to make no headway against the hurricane. Still she could hear the muffled jingle of the bells, sounding as if they were borne by a horse wallowing through deep snow, farther and farther off. It was her own father's horse, driven by William Rayburn. He had passed within a half a dozen rods of her without hearing her voice.

When Mr. Daskill returned to Marian's room, and saw her furs on a chair, and a pair of overshoes she had set out (but had not put on, choosing the Wetherspun stockings instead), he smiled at what seemed a childish device to startle him. For so implicitly did he trust to her timid, clinging nature, and to his ascendancy over her, that he did not once doubt his power to subdue her ultimately to his wishes ; and the possibility of her leaving the house on such a night had not entered his mind.

When, however, he advanced to the bed, and found it empty, he smiled no longer. Then the brief note she had left on the bureau caught his eye. It was written in a firm but hurried hand. It was not folded ; it bore neither his name nor hers. To read it, he had to put his glasses on and hold it to the light. But its purport was plain enough.

"I am going home. I shall not come back until you do me justice. Never while that woman is in the house. Good by. I feel that it is forever."

Its tone was not such as he would have expected, — no wail of a broken heart, no cry for pity. He had not given her credit for so much resolution. He took off his glasses, walked quickly to the window, heard the storm drive and howl for a moment, then examined the hall door. Finding it unfastened, he called Mrs. Chilgrove, took her into Marian's room, and told her what had taken place.

"Gone home?" she said, with a smile, reading the poor girl's parting words. "How long ago?"

That question was not easily answered. It was more than three hours since he left Marian in her room, and she had escaped in the interval.

They looked at each other, — her eyes brightly scintillant; his, turbid with trouble of soul. Perhaps he was thinking of the pure, beautiful young creature he had sacrificed for this woman, and comparing, in a moment of remorse, the evil he had chosen with the good he had cast away. She was neither pure, nor beautiful, nor young; whence, then, the power by which she had brought him now, a second time, to an unpleasant crisis in his life?

"I am surprised," said she, with a tinge of scorn in her tones, "that you should be so much disturbed."

"Disturbed!" he exclaimed, starting towards the door. "She has never got through this storm. I'll find her and bring her back."

She stepped quickly to his side and caught his arm.

"Adolphus! you will do no such thing."

He seized her wrist, wrenched off her hold of him, and glared at her.

"You are the most heartless, cold-blooded woman I ever saw!"

She receded a step before him into the entry, and answered quietly, but with a pale, pitiless face, —

“So I have heard you say before. But you don’t believe it. You always come back and recant, and swear that no other woman has so much heart. I have reason and courage; that is all. I wish you had more.”

“And would you have me sit still here, when, for aught we know, she may be at this moment perishing in the snow?”

He stood in the doorway, she, in the dim entry beyond, facing him, her thin lips pale and compressed, her eyes gleaming, catlike, in the rays of the lamp from the room behind them.

“Adolphus, listen! This scheme of yours for making her live in the same house with us and indorse your respectability is impracticable. I have let you amuse yourself with the idea, but I tell you now it is unworthy a man of spirit.”

Adolphus gave her a baleful look. “You are right, I suppose. What union can there be between a woman like you and an innocent girl like her? I found you out long ago; and I’m astonished at myself for having had anything to do with you since. I wonder I have n’t killed you! Stand out of my way now, — you’d better! I might have been happy with her, if it had n’t been for you.”

These last words broke from him in a stifled cry of rage and anguish. With a gleaming smile, she made way for him, and he hurried from the house.

Unlocking the stable, he bridled his horse in the dark, led him out without a saddle, leaped on his blanketed back, and rode forth on his dubious errand. In his rough-weather coat and cap, he minded the storm very little; and the long-stepping animal got through the drifts so easily that he was encouraged to think Marian might have passed without very great hardship or peril two hours before. In the worst places he paused and shouted, and listened for any cry that might

reach his ears through the tumult and gray gloom. But no cry was heard. He kept on to the village. Every house was dark.

The horse stopped of his own accord at Mr. Fenway's gate, and the muffled rider, turning his back to the storm, peering anxiously through the wild snow-cloud at the unlighted windows and forbidding door, could hardly have helped thinking of the time when he made Marian's acquaintance and accompanied her home with his dog, and of the days of his brief, ardent wooing. Where was the charm the old house held for him then, where the intoxicating cup of life he came so eagerly to sip? So few months had passed, and now here he was on such a different business.

"If she's there, she's safe: no use of rousing up and alarming the folks. She's there, undoubtedly."

Coming to which conclusion, he gave a last look at the dimly outlined house, and rode back homeward, again searching the way and shouting as he paused in the deepest drifts. No discoveries. He put up the horse, and, with a heavy heart, re-entered the house.

CHAPTER XLIII.

WHY MILES CALLED ON ADOLPHUS.

MRS. CHILGROVE had shut herself in her room. Adolphus did not go to her, but sat down in Marian's room, and looked gloomily at the empty bed and the unused overshoes and furs, and lighted a cigar, and smoked, and thought.

At the breakfast-table the next morning he and Mrs. Chilgrove met with the usual civilities, as if nothing had happened to mar the harmony of their lives. She knew that he had not brought his wife home, and was not disposed to quarrel with the Fates on that account. And he, though haunted all night by a feeling that Marian was out in the storm (he had even left the door unfastened, in a sort of superstitious hope that she might find her way back to it), had now reasoned himself into a firm morning-light conviction that she was safe in her father's house.

The storm had blown itself out by daybreak, though a sharp wind still swept little volleys of drifting snow hither and thither, like cold white flames running over the billows of a dazzling white sea. The invisible, mighty hand that had sculptured the world in marvellous beauty and purity was adding a few light touches to the work, — tipping an airy turret, curving a more delicately crested wave, or hollowing soft, ethereal, bluish depths within some exquisite shell-like whorl.

Mr. Daskill was in no hurry to reach his place of business that morning. No tracks were yet broken ; the village would hardly be peeping out of its white nightcap before noon. But his mind still reverted to the heavy snow-banks through

which he had ridden the night before in search of Marian. He did not like to be seen riding down there making a more thorough search by daylight. No ; he would not even own to himself that anything else was probable than that she was safe at home. But there was a magnificent view from the cupola of the house ; it must be particularly fine that morning ; and Mr. Daskill had an excellent glass.

After breakfast, not caring to confer with Mrs. Chilgrove, and having no mail or newspapers to amuse him, he went up to take a look. He had been in the cupola half an hour, turning the telescope again and again to every part of the road which Marian must have traversed to reach her father's house, but discovering nothing but bare trees, and occasionally a wall or fence, rising above the drifts, when with his naked eye he noticed some one approaching from the village. It was a man ; he was tall ; his long limbs made little of the snow through which they had to wade. Adolphus aimed his glass quickly. His first impression was confirmed ; the comer was Miles Fenway. He thought he knew what that meant. Marian must certainly have reached home. He felt vastly relieved, though the prospect of meeting a wrathful father was not extremely pleasant.

He put away his telescope, went down into the library, and placed himself at his desk, where Miles Fenway, on his arrival, found him engaged in writing letters, like the assiduous man of business he was.

"Ah, good morning," said he, blotting his sheet and putting up the pen. "Did n't you find a little snow in your way?"

"All that my legs wanted to deal with, long as they are," said Miles, taking a chair, and stretching his feet out towards the cheery fire in the grate. "I've been bringing some in on to your fine carpets, spite of my stamping and brushing."

"A little clean snow does n't hurt anything," said Adolphus, pleased to find his father-in-law's manner so conciliatory, and

resolved not to show that he remembered their quarrel of the day before. "Won't you pull off your boots?"

"No, it won't be worth while; my trousers are tied down, and I can stop but a minute. I've come on business, and very unexpected business."

"Ah?" said Adolphus, turning on his chair, and sticking out his feet to the fire. He put his hands together, and added, with a smile which promised the most plausible excuses and explanations, "I suppose I can guess what it is."

"Very likely," said Miles. "Now I think of it, the wonder is that something of the kind has n't come up before."

"I don't exactly understand that." Mr. Daskill's countenance changed.

"That's because you don't know the old man as well as I do."

"What old man?" Adolphus was all adrift.

"Old Carolus. He came for his money late yesterday afternoon; said he must have it, and I suppose he must. I disliked mightily to trouble you about it, — just at this time; but I see no other way. I went over to the store last evening, just after you had left it; and, thinking you might not get down this forenoon, I came up here to see you. If, as you say, you have anticipated the business," Miles added, "I trust it won't put you to very great inconvenience."

The impure, dark flush, so often noticed by those who saw him in moments of excitement, was in the son-in-law's face again. Miles could see that he had in some way taken him very much by surprise.

"Perhaps this is not just what you anticipated."

"No, it is not," said Adolphus. "Why did n't the old man demand his money when it was due? I had it for him then, you remember."

"Yes; and I told him so. His reply was that he did n't want it then, but he does want it now."

Adolphus was by this time himself again. His eyes had been suffused and flickering; but he now turned, and in his large, candid way fixed them on his father-in-law.

"I have made no provision for repaying you that four thousand dollars. On the contrary, I've got to advance four thousand for you within a week. I was going to mention the circumstance to you yesterday, but our conversation took such a turn that I thought I had better make the advance and say nothing about it."

"I don't know what you are talking about," Mr. Fenway replied, keeping cool, and trying not to show how much he was astonished. "If I understand the matter between us, it amounts simply to this, — that you owe me four thousand dollars. Is n't that it?"

"Oh, no!" said Adolphus, with a smile. "You owe *me* four thousand, — or will, after I've advanced it for you."

"That's a riddle. All I know is, I borrowed four thousand dollars for you of old Carolus, and that you gave me your memorandum for it."

"Very well. Have you that memorandum with you?"

"I have." And Miles Fenway, beginning to look a little pale, produced a paper from his pocket-book.

In the intervals of their conversation, Adolphus had time to think of a good many things, and he now said to himself, "He is determined to break with me; he was inclined that way yesterday. Now Marian has gone home and told her story; but he will keep that in the background until he has got his money. It's all a lie about old Carolus wanting it."

Then, as Miles was glancing his eye over the memorandum, Adolphus said aloud, —

"If I remember rightly, I specify in that paper the object to which the money is to be applied, and agree to return it to you, at your option, in three months, or give you the benefit

of the investment, as an equal partner with my uncle and myself, in the oil-land purchase. Is n't that about it?"

Miles was quite pale by this time; but he still kept cool.

"That is about it," he said, lifting his clear gray eyes from the paper to his son-in-law's affable face. "But you know I scouted the idea of my being a partner, or of making an investment."

"So you did at first, but you tacitly assented to it finally. And when at the expiration of three months I offered you your money, you took, as I supposed, the alternative, and chose to let it stand as an investment."

"Excuse me for saying it," Miles answered; "but I can't believe that you supposed any such thing. Whatever this paper may say," — striking it with his fingers, — "I trusted to your word of honor; and you remember very well your most positive promise that I should never be called upon for a dollar; that, although you had credited me with stock, you would take it off my hands at any time."

"Yes, I said something of that sort, I remember. And I don't say that I won't do it now; though, after what you have done, or permitted to be done on your premises, and with your sanction, to discredit and injure the enterprise, I think I might claim that you have forfeited the right to remind me of any such promise. If I engage to prevent a man from falling off a bridge, and he not only undertakes to jump off, but to pull me off too, I think, to save myself, I may let him go into the water without many scruples of conscience. I don't say you have meant to do just that sort of thing; but it amounts to that."

With this little speech, which he flattered himself left him master of the situation, Adolphus crossed his legs before the fire, rolled over on the arm of his chair, and looked composedly at his father-in-law. Miles pierced him with his serious gray eyes, but said not a word.

"Now just see how I am situated," Adolphus continued. "Our second payment is overdue. I supposed the sales of stocks would be sufficient to meet it, but the revenue from that source has been mostly absorbed in boring and other expenses. We did n't propose at first to sink wells; but it was afterwards decided that it would be greatly to our advantage to do so. One good flowing well, and we can have everything our own way. We have struck oil, but not in sufficient quantity, and we are going deeper. Meanwhile our second payment must be made. I have been getting ready to do my share towards that, and to carry your share, if necessary. That, you see, leaves me unprepared to help you about taking up Carolus's note."

"Then what am I to do?" Miles inquired.

"I don't know," replied Adolphus, coolly.

After a pause, Miles said, "Am I to understand that you refuse to do anything about the repayment of this money which I borrowed for you?"

"No, don't understand that I refuse, but that I don't see how I am able to help you just now."

"And you have nothing more to say?"

"Nothing on that point, — at least, until I have consulted my uncle," Mr. Daskill added, wishing, for his own advantage in making terms for Marian's return to him, to leave the door of reconciliation open a little way.

"Then I don't see but that I have come on a wild-goose chase, and may as well wade back through the snow again."

Mr. Fenway got up and took his hat, — hesitated, — then turned, and said to his son-in-law, who was still seated, —

"How is Marian this morning?"

Adolphus looked up with an incredulous smile.

"I've been expecting *you* to tell *me* how she is," he replied.

"Is this another of your riddles?" said Miles, standing

with his back to the fire, and gazing down on his son-in-law with a guileless, melancholy expression. "I don't wish to mix her up in these matters of business between you and me, so I haven't asked to see her; I did n't wish to see her this morning, unless you and I could first come to an understanding. Her happiness is of more consequence than our business interests. Whatever happens, we will agree in that."

Adolphus could no longer doubt the sincerity of the man speaking in these tones of the daughter he loved. He rose, and stood confronting him, — a rather short, stocky figure, compared with the tall, lanky Miles (the way Daskill usually carried himself made him appear at least a head taller than he really was), — and answered, with visible anxiety, —

"We will agree in that, certainly. I thought it was in her behalf that you had come this morning."

Miles was alarmed. "Where is she?"

"If she is n't at your house, God knows, — I don't."

"At my house? I have n't seen her for a week! Is n't she — my daughter Marian, your wife, — is n't she *here*?"

"No. She went away, without my knowledge, some time between eight o'clock and eleven, last night. She left a note on her table, saying she was going home."

Miles was in a maze. "How was she to get home?"

"I don't know. As soon as I discovered that she was gone, I went after her, and explored the way as far as to your gate; seeing no light in the house, I concluded she had got there early in the evening, and gone to bed."

"She hasn't been home at all; she could n't have got home, such a night as last night, — certainly, not without help. Did anybody call for her?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"She went alone, — on foot? What could have driven her out in such a storm?"

"That's the mystery," said Adolphus. "We had had some words on an unpleasant subject, but nothing unkind on my part, and I can't conceive why she should have taken such a step."

Miles forbore to speak for a moment. Then he said, "Show me the note she left."

Adolphus, after a little hesitation, produced it. Any concealment with regard to that, he was aware, would be useless, and might lead to unpleasant complications. The father's fingers trembled as he put on his spectacles, and there seemed to be a strange mistiness about the glasses as he read his daughter's farewell words.

"What woman does she allude to?"

"Mrs. Chilgrove. There has been some trouble between them. Marian — unreasonably, I thought — insisted on her leaving the house. Mrs. Chilgrove has n't the pleasantest manners in the world, but she is extremely useful — I might say indispensable — to my son, and I begged Marian to bear with her, at least until I could get somebody to take her place. I had no doubt but she would, after a little consideration, agree to this; and I was never more astonished than when I found she had quitted the house."

Adolphus had made up his mind that candor was his cue, and he played his part admirably. But the open, convincing manner of him did not convince Mr. Fenway.

"Mr. Daskill," said Miles, as he handed back the paper, "I have suspected for some time that everything was not right between you and Marian. I know nothing of what the trouble has been." He returned his spectacles to their case, and the case to his pocket. "But I know her disposition. With love and kindness, you could do anything with her; and only some great wrong or cruelty could ever have driven her to leave your house. You have not made her happy; her marriage has been a bitter disappointment to me; and now, if

last night has put an end to miseries she was not fitted to bear —”

Miles paused a moment, his voice choked, his countenance agitated with powerful emotions. Then he resumed : —

“ I can forgive you for dragging me into your ruinous speculations, and robbing my family of a few thousand dollars. I did n't mean to have any quarrel with you about that. I came here this morning resolved, for her sake, to have peace. But if you have broken my poor girl's heart, — if you have murdered her, as I fear you have, — there is no peace for you. God will judge you, God will judge you, Adolphus Daskill ! ”

So saying, he turned to go. Adolphus, who had stood quite silent while he was speaking, recovered his speech quickly, as he accompanied him to the door.

“ I don't wonder,” he said, “ that you feel as you do. It is very alarming, very distressing, this conduct of hers. I'll go with you and look for her. I am sure she must have found shelter somewhere.”

Miles did not wait for him, but went on before, taking long strides through the snow ; Adolphus, as became his greater dignity and lesser legs, following on horseback.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW THE LOST ONE WAS FOUND.

VERY different must have been the feelings of the two men, starting off on that dubious quest for the lost girl. Under all the father's terrible anxiety, there was a solemn sense of resignation to the calamity he feared, and for which he tried to prepare himself by saying constantly, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" Much as he dreaded the worst (or what is commonly deemed the worst), he knew well that there might be far worse things in the world for his poor girl than death.

It would be a satisfaction to know that the husband felt no less grief and pity, but I fear that the solicitude he showed was quite as much on his own account as Marian's. Amid all his other emotions, whatever they may have been, there was room for much disgust and rage at the publicity of the affair, which was now inevitable.

When Mr. Fenway said to him, in a calm and gentle voice, "If you, Mr. Daskill, will ride over to Mr. Merrifield's and make inquiries, I will stop at Warton's," the haughty one drew rein.

Merrifield's and Warton's were the nearest houses,—Merrifield's, a mere hut, a few rods back from the road. To ride across through the levels of untrodden snow, knock at the door, and ask the occupants if they had given refuge during the night to the wife his cruelty had driven out of doors, was a pretty hard thing for Adolphus; but he did it, disguising the ugly facts in as fair and plausible terms as he could command.

Neither at Warton's nor Merrifield's had Marian been seen or heard from ; and now the quest must be carried further. Miles went on to secure aid in the village, while Adolphus remained to ride up and down through the drifts, searching miserably for he dreaded to think what, not a little exasperated by the questions concerning the hour, the manner, and the reason of Marian's leaving his house, with others touching his domestic affairs, bawled at him across the snow by Warton's big boys, who had come out to shovel tracks. Snow-bound as Waybrook was, the startling news of Mrs. Daskill's disappearance quickly pierced its muffled ears, and set it all agog with curiosity and excitement. Men clearing doorsteps shouted it to each other ; path-making boys, wallowing from house to house, carried it ; women screamed it from window to window across the way.

Then, almost as suddenly, spread the news that she was found.

After William Rayburn, in Miles Fenway's sleigh, had passed the spot where Marian called in vain from the wayside field, and was driving on towards the village, the horse, toiling through an uncommonly deep drift, all at once came to a halt.

"Very well, old boy ; rest awhile," said Will. "Then one more pull, and we are home."

The rest was longer than either he or the tired animal anticipated. For now, the sound of bells being no longer borne to her on the blast, Marian — in the wild hope that the sleigh had stopped, and the wilder fear that it would go on again — put forth one final frantic effort to make herself heard. She staggered forward through the snow, fell, and partly rose again, struggling on with hands and feet, all the while uttering shriek upon shriek.

Then came an answering shout, sounding quite loud and near : for though Will had not yet left the cutter, the wind was

blowing almost directly from him to her. Then there was a lull. He listened, heard another cry, and, dropping the reins, plunged into the drifts in the direction whence it came.

Just as Marian sank down with a last smothered cry, he reached her side. He had not any idea who she was, even when he lifted her up. But she had recognized his voice. She knew that she was saved, and by whom. She was weeping and sobbing in a faint, hysterical way, and he was supporting her, brushing the snow from her face and garments, when the truth was suddenly revealed to him: it was Marian he held in his arms.

There was no time for questions or explanations. Half bearing, half dragging her, he made his way back as best he could to the cutter, shook the snow out of her clothing, and wrapped her in the robe. All this seemed to him like a terrible dream.

Then he asked where she was going; and should he take her home?

"Yes — no — O William!" she said, "I have no home! I am an outcast. No, no; don't take me back there to *his* house."

With unspeakable tenderness he drew the covering more closely about her, and drove on towards the village. He could feel her sobbing under the robe.

"Poor Marian!" he said, putting his face down to her, "be comforted: you are safe now."

"Heaven sent you to me, William!" she replied in a burst of grateful emotion.

"Yes, I think so. This is your father's cutter you are in. How long have you been out in the storm?"

"I don't know. It was dreadful! I had given up that I must die. And only a little while before I had been wishing for death. Oh, that woman, that woman, William!"

"You mean Mrs. Chilgrove? It is what I feared."

"But it is worse — oh ! oh ! a hundred times worse than you can think. I can never go to my husband again. I have no husband. *She* has taken him from me."

William had to put his face down into the robe which enwrapped her, in order to make out these broken words, amidst the pelting and blustering of the storm. She was sobbing again with anguish of body and soul. He hardly knew what to say.

"No, Marian," he replied, — and there was hope and comfort for her in the deep kindness of his tones, if not in the words he spoke, — "she cannot have taken him from you. How can he give *you* up for *her*? He will come to himself; he will wish to have you back again, at any sacrifice."

She was willing enough to believe this. Yet she would not have had him say it with such wholly disinterested confidence, but would have better liked worse counsel. He had saved her from death: would he not also save her from despair? was he not her destiny?

He urged on the jaded horse as fast as possible, and they were by this time near her father's house. She foresaw the consternation of her parents at sight of her, coming to them on such a night and for such cause. She dreaded more and more her mother's fright and furious indignation; and, when they stopped at the gate, finding that the lights in the house were extinguished, and the inmates probably abed, her heart failed her altogether.

William would gladly have taken her home and given her shelter beneath his mother's roof. But, courageous as he was to brave the world's censure of his own conduct, he felt a maidenly timidity on her account. If she should accept that refuge, who would believe his rescue of her to have been accidental and innocent? Not Adolphus Daskill, for one.

Yet he, too, shrank from rousing up Miles Fenway, and telling the news which might better be postponed until morning.

What then should be done? It was a matter to be decided quickly, and he thought of Lottie. But Marian said, "Take me to Julia: she has begged me to come to her."

"Yes, that will be best." For where could she find another so discreet and faithful friend?

He urged on the unwilling horse. And now it occurred to him that Marian might perhaps make up her quarrel with her husband before even her own family knew that a quarrel had occurred.

There was fortunately a light in Mr. Farnell's sitting-room. Julia was there, sewing for the family; all the rest had retired. Hearing a muffled knock at the door, she appeared, bearing a lamp, and beheld with astonishment Will's icicled beard and red face peer from his snow-covered garments, while he briefly announced his strange business.

"Julia, I have brought Marian to you. Can you take her in?"

He scarcely waited for her reply, but plunged again into the snow. She held the door open, having set the lamp on the stairs, and saw, by the dim rays which streamed forth into the hoary chaos and wild vortex of the storm, a horse and sleigh faintly outlined, and a shape which Will lifted and bore up the steps. The loosened sleigh-robe fell off, and Marian slid helplessly into the arms of her friend.

"Why, Marian! where have you been?" said Julia, in a whisper of amazement and commiseration.

"I picked her up in the storm," Will explained, as they hastily took her into the warm sitting-room. "She will tell you more than she has told me. She must be made dry and warm as soon as possible. Have you hot water, — spirits of any kind? Let me get them!"

There was hot water on the kitchen stove. Ward Farnell's decanter was near by on the table, where he had left it when he mixed his toddy before going to bed. While Julia was

removing Marian's outer garments, Will prepared a glass, which he brought and held to her lips. She drank, and in the midst of her suffering, gave him a look of grateful affection.

"What should I do if it were not for you two?" she murmured. "You are both so good to me!"

No time was to be lost in getting off her clothing, which clung to her, stiff with ice or damp with melting snow; and Will, anxious as he was to do her further service, hastened to take leave. She held out her hand to him, with a sweet, sad, suffering smile. He pressed it with ineffable tenderness,—it had once been so dear to him, and it was such a cold little hand now!

"Do you remember when I first met you in this room, Will?" she said, with touching pathos.

He stood silent, with quivering lips. The old, beautiful dream came back,—all the hope, and love, and passionate sorrow, at least in memory; and now the sight of her, the delicate, crushed flower of girlhood that so lately filled his life with fragrance, was too much even for his strong will and calm philosophy. He dropped a tear on the little hand, and turned away with a stifled sob. The outer door opened and closed again, and the two girls were left alone.

CHAPTER XLV.

HOW MRS. FENWAY RECEIVED THE NEWS.

WILL was at the shop the next morning shovelling the snow from before the office door when the alarm caused by Marian's disappearance ran through the village. He dropped everything and started for Mr. Fenway's house, now running where the way had been cleared and now floundering in the drifts, and announcing to every one he saw that the missing one was safe.

Miles had just reached home with his news when Will arrived with his. He found wild panic in the Fenway household, — Frank calling his dog to start off on a hunt for his sister; Walter in the front entry with his snow-shovel, the door wide open; the mother questioning her husband in the greatest terror and bewilderment; eyes and ivory of black Nance gleaming with excitement in the background; Miles alone self-possessed, though strongly agitated, as he told his story.

Will walked in without ceremony, and, for the first time since his affair with Marian was broken off, confronted Mrs. Fenway in her own house. He was not the person she most wished to see at such a time. She turned upon him sharply.

"What do you want?" she cried. "O William!" her angry tone suddenly breaking, while grief convulsed her white and frightened face, "our trouble is very great. You can triumph in it if you will."

The young man replied, "She is found, she is safe; that is what I have come to tell you."

"Marian?" screamed Mrs. Fenway, rushing upon him with

wild joy, which could hardly be distinguished from rage.
 "Where is she?"

"At Julia Farnell's."

Poor Mrs. Fenway dropped upon the sofa with sobbing laughter. Miles stepped forward and grasped William's hand.

"How did you hear this?"

"I have n't heard it at all. I found her myself as I was driving home last night. Your lights were out, so I took her on to Julia's."

"You found her, — how?"

"She was lost in the snow, — strayed out of the road. The horse stopped, and I heard her cry."

Once more Mrs. Fenway sprang upon him, her eyes flashing through tears.

"And why did n't you come and tell us at once, and save us from this — all this —" She could n't find the word she wanted, but a sob came instead.

"It was to save you from what I knew would distress you that I did n't come," William replied.

"I understand," said Miles. "You did right. We might not have heard of it at all, if I had n't gone up to Mr. Daskill's this morning on business."

"What business, I'd like to know?" Mrs. Fenway demanded. "You never told me you were going."

"No, I hoped it might be settled without your being made anxious about it. But I don't see much chance of it now, and you may as well know that Mr. Carolus is after his money, and that Mr. Daskill refused to pay it this morning. Then it came out that Marian had left him."

"She has n't left him! I won't have it that she has left him! Though what she was out in the storm for is more than I know. My poor child! Oh, that Adolphus Daskill!"

She raved a moment, then suddenly changed her tone again.

"As kind a husband as ever was. They are very fond of each other, William, whatever you may think. If there had been anything wrong, I'm sure I should have known it. I'll go right over to Julia's. Lost in the snow, poor child! Oh, these men, these men! Of course Mr. Daskill will pay that money; he's the soul of honor. What wrong could there have been that Mrs. Chilgrove would n't have known of and told me, as she promised?"

Talking in this way, Mrs. Fenway brought out her bonnet and shawl and was putting them on.

"I hope you have n't been duped by that woman," said Miles. "If I understand it, she is the cause of Marian's trouble. I believe she has been plotting this thing for a long while."

Miles, who so seldom spoke ill of anybody, expressed this opinion of Mrs. Chilgrove in a most emphatic manner. Then suddenly a terrible conviction came home to the heart of Mrs. Fenway, and once more, with her bonnet-strings half tied, she sank on the sofa. The woman she had heard talking with Adolphus that night when she was shut up in the Folly and was called by him a silly old fool; the woman Nance had seen with him in the woods; that mysterious being whom she had sought in vain to discover, and finally engaged Mrs. Chilgrove's help in hunting down, was — there could be no doubt of it — Mrs. Chilgrove herself.

"The hussy! to hoodwink me!" she said, bouncing up again and starting for the door.

"Where are you going?" said Miles.

"I'm going to my child."

"You can't get there: the tracks are not broken, and scarcely a path is shovelled."

"I'm going to my child!" Mrs. Fenway repeated.

But, having got to the end of Walter's excavation before

the house, she paused before the formidable drifts that blocked the way.

"Oh, if I had wings!" she cried, with frantic impatience. But, not having wings, she was forced to return into the house and let him go in her place.

"Come back at once," she commanded, "and tell me everything. I am dying to hear from her, — the poor, dear child! William! William Rayburn! Don't go. I want to speak with you."

So William had to go back into the sitting-room and tell her all the circumstances of his finding and rescuing Marian. She interrupted him with outbursts of grief, remorse, and rage.

"She must have been crazy to try to get home in such a storm. Nance, shut that door and go to your dishes. My poor, dear, broken-hearted Marian! I don't see but what you acted like a Christian, William; and it was very delicate in you not to try to get from her — Frank, why don't you go and help Walter shovel out that path? But I wish she had told you more; for, as a friend of the family, I am sure you can be trusted. O William! she has n't been happy, that I know. I've thought, many a time, that perhaps I did wrong in giving my consent to her marriage."

At the word "consent," Will smiled. She wiped her eyes and went on.

"But we are not always wise. Oh, if I had only seen things a year ago as I see them now. I have been deceived, — wickedly deceived."

"Yes, Mrs. Fenway," said Will, "you have been deceived, but by nobody more than by yourself. You knew, or might have known, many things which you did not wish to know, and would not believe."

"That is true, that is true. I was blind, blind, because I would n't see. I felt all the while that there was something false about Mr. Daskill, — he was so full of fine promises,

which he never kept. And I knew there was something wrong, but I kept it to myself and let the marriage go on. Oh, the perfidy of that woman !”

Mr. Fenway now came in looking grave and troubled. His wife flew to him with anxious inquiries.

“ You need n’t go, William,” said Miles. “ I don’t know of anybody better entitled to our confidence than you are ; and I, for one, need your advice and sympathy.”

Will had never seen the strong man so shaken. Feeling himself not much more than a boy beside him, the thought of one he so loved and revered clinging to him for support touched him deeply.

“ Yes,” Miles went on, in response to his wife’s eager questions, “ I have seen her. But I did not talk with her much ; she is weak and feverish, and the sight of me seemed to overcome her. She will not leave her bed to-day, nor to-morrow, I fear. Fortunately, it is Saturday, and Julia has no school to call her away. Marian could not speak of her, — nor of you, William, — without tears.”

“ I ’ll make Julia a handsome present,” Mrs. Fenway declared. “ She deserves one, if ever a girl did. What did you learn about the trouble ? ”

“ I got a little from Marian, and a good deal more from Julia ; and it seems that Mrs. Chilgrove and Mr. Daskill knew each other long before either of them came to this town, where they met as strangers. Julia’s friend, Mr. Rocknam, knew of the old intrigue, and recognized Mrs. Chilgrove when he was here in October.”

Thereupon Mrs. Fenway, seeing how much worse things were than she had suspected, and how completely she had been duped, burst forth into a frenzy of invective against Mrs. Chilgrove, Mr. Daskill, and her own stupid self, in the midst of which Walter put his head in at the door, and announced that Mr. Daskill was coming.

"Let him come!" cried the angry little lady, rushing to the window, where she saw Adolphus ride up to the gate and dismount with the old arrogant air that distinguished him. "See him strut and throw his head back, as if he was lord of creation, and all the rest of us his abject slaves! He'll find out! I've a dose for him!"

"I beg of you," said Miles, "don't give way to your temper, and make matters worse than they are."

"Oh, no, I won't give way to my temper, — oh, no! I'll be sweet with him; I'll cringe and fawn, as I have many a time when I could have scratched his eyes out!" — ending with a little laugh that boded no good to Adolphus.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ADOLPHUS GOES TO FETCH MARIAN HOME.

ENTERING the room as Will left it, Mr. Daskill found Miles sitting grave and silent in a chair, and Mrs. Fenway on the sofa, stifling her sighs, compressing her lips, and appearing angrily oblivious of his existence.

"I am told that Marian is here," said Adolphus, addressing himself to Miles.

"It is a mistake; she is not here," Mr. Fenway replied, without moving from his chair or offering one to his son-in-law, — a marked instance of neglect in one so uniformly courteous.

Adolphus appeared surprised.

"Have n't you seen her?" he asked.

"I have just come from an interview with her."

"Where?" Getting no immediate response, Mr. Daskill added, "I suppose I have a right to know."

"I don't know that you have. That she is alive now, we have not you to thank. Your conduct — which I will not characterize — drove her out of your house in last night's storm, when she came near losing her life, and would certainly have lost it, if it had n't been for the young man you just saw going out from here."

Purple, even to the appearance of suffocation, grew the visage of Adolphus, who, after struggling for a moment to get the better, as it were, of a too closely fitting neck-cloth, answered huskily, —

"I suppose I can guess, then, where she is. And of course I must think there was an understanding between them. She

was not a girl to go out into such a storm without knowing pretty well what was to become of her. That's what his saving her life amounts to."

Before Miles could answer his son-in-law, Mrs. Fenway rushed in between them with a fierce little fist and a shriek.

"Sir! Mr. Daskill! you think our daughter *that* kind of girl, do you?"

"It would seem so," said Adolphus coolly, "since she allowed him to meet her and take her home."

"Take her *home*? You mean to *his* home?"

"That's what I understand."

"You understand the most outrageous falsehood ever invented by a false and cruel husband!" cried the little lady.

"It is of a piece with all the rest of your conduct towards this family. There!" She fluttered in his face, like an infuriated matron of the poultry-yard that sees her brood attacked. "Now you know what I think of you, Adolphus Daskill. She was dying when William Rayburn found her. Then where else should he take her, but to her friend, who had exposed your wrong-doings? There she is now, sick abed, — a wretched, outraged, broken-hearted wife! — at Julia Farnell's, if you wish to know."

"Then I may as well go there and find her," said Adolphus haughtily.

"You may as well keep away, sir: she is not able to see you. She shall not see you."

"You forget, madam, that she is my wife."

"Oh, would I *could* forget! Would I *could* forget the wrong and insult you have heaped upon this family!" And Mrs. Fenway went off in a storm of sobs and tears.

"It is gratifying, at least," said the son-in-law, "to know what my wife's mother thinks of me."

"You may as well know it," Mrs. Fenway retorted, over her handkerchief. "To think how you came into this family, and

beguiled our only daughter into marrying you, and you all the time in relations with that designing, deceitful, unprincipled creature, that you afterwards bamboozled her into choosing for a companion."

"I see that I am condemned," said Adolphus, standing on his dignity, "before I am permitted a word in my own defence."

"I've no doubt but you have a tissue of lies to cover up your wickedness; but it won't avail, it won't avail with me, sir! I know more than you think. I have long known of your secret connection with a woman — I have seen you with her, sir! I have overheard your talk with her! I am a silly fool, am I? Can wind me around your little finger, can you? Nancy has seen you with her, too, since you were married, though you tried to outface her in it with your threats and lies. Oh, if I had known *then* who that woman was!"

"I see it will be of little use for me to make any explanation," said Adolphus.

"Very little use indeed, sir! What I have seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears can't be easily explained away. Oh, to think how our innocent child was deceived! A girl sought after as she was, — fairly pestered with offers from the very best young men, — and might have made the best match in the country!"

"You seemed to think she was making a very good match. At any rate, you have yourself to thank for it."

"Ungrateful, to fling that into my teeth. I did believe you were a respectable man, Mr. Daskill. I did hope you would make our daughter happy. I did favor you, and I am punished for it. Oh, your smooth words and fine airs, Adolphus Daskill! they were enough to deceive even the elect. Member of the firm of Goldfinch & Co.! while now it turns out that you are not a member of the firm at all, and I doubt if you ever were. Your grand oil speculation, that was going to

make fortunes for all of us, and my husband need n't even put his hand into his pocket, but all his outlay would be met by sales of stock; and now it appears that the stock is worthless, and he has that note of Carolus's to pay. Oh, you're a fine son-in-law!"

Notwithstanding the recent panic among buyers, Mrs. Fenway had stoutly stood up for the stock until this moment. Miles could n't help smiling at this instant change in her opinion, while Adolphus looked black.

"If there is a temporary depression of the stock, you may blame your husband for it," he answered surlily. "I can afford it if he can. I was prepared to keep my engagement with him to the minutest particular, until I heard how he had gone back on me. Now let him stand from under."

"Adolphus Daskill, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say, madam. He has indorsed my enemy and injured my business. You condemn me unheard. Now let him take care of himself. The Carolus note is a small part of his obligations. I hold him as a partner in the enterprise. Another four thousand dollars is already due from him, and the third payment of four thousand will be due in four months. Let him prepare for them; why should I put myself out on his account?"

Menacing, belligerent, stood the son-in-law at bay. Mrs. Fenway turned pale and gasped for breath. Miles did not try to conceal his deep concern, but he answered calmly, —

"I must think you are glad of an excuse to break your word with me, Mr. Daskill. And I think I begin to understand your scheme."

"Oh, no, you don't yet!" retorted Adolphus, with an ugly smile. "There's several thousand dollars more, for expenses incurred. My uncle and I have advanced everything so far. We can't carry your load any longer. You will have to pay your share."

"Mr. Daskill, this is preposterous. You can never hold me as a partner."

"Can't I? I have plenty of proof. Your wife has kindly informed everybody of the fact; and it is rather late for you to deny it after the enterprise turns out to be unprofitable. One third of the stock stands in your name on the books."

"What has been done with the money raised by the sale of stock? I understood that was to meet all expenses."

"It has been used for that purpose. But that was my uncle's stock and mine. None of your stock has been sold," Adolphus informed his father-in-law.

Miles was bewildered for a moment. Mrs. Fenway broke in.

"I'm sure," she cried, in a fluttering, frightened way, "I don't understand a word of this business."

"No, you probably don't," said her husband. "You never did know quite so much about it as you supposed. And now it appears there's been a scheme within a scheme, too deep for us, I confess, till our honorable son-in-law finds it convenient to inform us how shrewdly he has played his game, and how thoroughly we've been swindled. The long and short of it is, — if what he says is true, and he can hold me as a partner, — we are ruined."

"Swindled! ruined!" gasped out Mrs. Fenway.

"Swindled is a hard word, Mr. Fenway," said Adolphus.

"It is a word I never expected to apply to any one connected with my family," said Miles. "The saddest thing about it is, that it seems to be the right word. That you should drag me into your speculation against my will, assign to me one third of the stock, which remains unsold, and now never can be sold, while you and your uncle have been making a market for your shares, and now coolly inform me that I am to be held not only for the three payments of twelve thousand dollars, but also for one third of the expenses of boring, getting your stock certificates engraved and printed,

your uncle's salary as manager, and I don't know what else, for all which I have nothing to show but a little worthless paper,—just look at it, Mr. Daskill! What is it but a bare-faced, downright swindle? I'm sorry if the word offends you, sorrier still that it is deserved."

"Well, call it what you please," said Adolphus sullenly. "If you choose to think that I deliberately planned to swindle and ruin my own father-in-law, you're welcome to the opinion."

"I don't think you fully intended all this, any more than you meant to wreck my daughter's happiness. I've no doubt you hoped well of the scheme. You would have preferred making a fortune for me, to sweeping away at a stroke what little I have. But there was some risk, and you took care that, if anybody suffered, it should n't be you. You were not so rich as you wished to be thought; and this is the desperate scheme you resorted to in order to better yourself."

"Did n't I offer to pay the Carolus note when it fell due?" Adolphus demanded.

"So you did; but you knew that neither I nor old Carolus was uneasy about the money at that time; and you made a pretence of wishing to use it in buying grain and wool. If I had urged the payment, you might possibly have met it, or you might have put it off with some other excuse. But it is useless to discuss that. You have sprung your trap, and I am in it. Worse than that, our daughter is in it. I hoped, for her sake, to keep peace with you; but now that you have frankly shown the depth and breadth of your dishonesty, and she has left you for another cause quite as discreditable to you, I see no reason why your connection with our family should be kept up."

"It is war, then, between us?" said Mr. Daskill, with a dark, fuliginous look.

"If you choose to have it so. I make war on nobody; but I shall defend myself as well as I can."

"War it is, then. Very good!"

Adolphus was turning to go, when Mrs. Fenway flung herself before him.

"I can't have it so! O Mr. Daskill! can't this thing be settled? Think of the consequences to Marian! You certainly can't wish to abandon her now, and ruin her parents. After all our hopes and plans—to come to this! A lawsuit, a divorce case—scandal and disgrace! I can't bear it! I can't bear it!"

The poor little lady actually fell upon her son-in-law's shoulder, embracing him hysterically. He looked down upon her with grim satisfaction. The interview was taking the turn he had hoped for.

"It is n't my choice," he replied coldly.

"Oh, then, if you would only say that your connection with that woman is something you were led into before you knew Marian, and that you would have broken it if you could,—for I know how such things sometimes work!"

"I could have said all that and a good deal more, if you had given me a chance. It is only on my son's account that I have kept her in the house."

"Oh, I was sure of it! And you will take her back?"

"I am very anxious to take her back. My happiness depends upon it," Adolphus magnanimously declared.

"Hear that, hear that, Miles Fenway!" cried the excited little woman. "Now come and take his hand. It can all be made up. You will take his hand, won't you, Mr. Daskill? I knew you would!" And she tried to drag the two men together, both of whom, it must be owned, looked reluctant and ashamed.

"I am ready to give him my hand," said Miles, "when he gives some pledge besides fair words for his future honorable conduct."

"He will do that, won't you, Mr. Daskill? And you will go and see poor, dear Marian, and make it up with her? I'll go and prepare her for the interview while you are talking business with Mr. Fenway. Now be kind, be generous with him, won't you?" cried the impulsive creature, looking as if she would have kissed her dear son-in-law if he had not stood so stiff and stubborn.

After she had left them, there was a thunder-cloud of ominous silence between the two men for about a minute. Then Miles said, —

"I should be glad to see this whole thing settled between you and me, and above all, between you and Marian, on just and honorable grounds, but on no other. So I am not so hopeful as my wife seems to be of an amicable agreement. She shows an abundant lack of discretion in the matter, and of course you understand that she does n't speak for me."

"I ought to understand it. Your language has been plain enough. I am sorry you have no more faith in me," Adolphus added.

"So am I," said Miles sincerely. "To have lost faith in you is the most grievous disappointment of my life. If you can do anything to restore it, you will give me the greatest happiness."

"Well, what can I do?"

"Get rid of that woman and never see her again. So much in justice to Marian. Keep your promise with me, — take up the Carolus note and relieve me of all obligations in the oil scheme. I may expect Carolus to levy on my property at any moment, if the note is not paid, for I've no money to pay it."

"Neither have I," said Adolphus. "My capital is all tied up. But I will telegraph to my uncle and see what he can do."

Mr. Fenway smiled sadly.

"You know, and I know, that your uncle will do nothing.

I see that I must prepare for the worst. Old Carolus is a man without mercy. I shall let things take their course. If my business and my property are to go, they may as well go first as last. I don't propose to struggle under a load of debt. I'm tired of struggling; I had enough of that before ever I knew you. If necessary, I can go back to my little shop, and bend over a horse's hoof again in my old age."

Again Adolphus moodily turned to go.

"One word more, Mr. Daskill. I think you had better not see Marian: she is too ill. No good whatever can come of an interview until you are prepared to do her justice."

Adolphus made no reply. He went out and found Mrs. Fenway trying to mount his horse at the gate. She had not expected him quite so soon, but had hoped to reach Mr. Farnell's house in time to see Marian, and allow Walter to take the horse back, before Adolphus was ready to follow her. Black Nance had brought out a chair, which she placed for the lady to stand on. Frank held the animal by the bridle, while Walter gave his mother a boost. Suddenly the horse shied into the drifts which the boys had been shovelling, and dropped Mrs. Fenway at full length in the deep snow. Walter was pulling her out, and black Nance was giggling, on the verge of convulsions, when Mr. Daskill appeared.

The scene would have been laughable enough if the occasion had not been so serious. He ordered Frank to lead the horse into the shovelled space again, and set the chair, as if minded to aid Mrs. Fenway in her efforts to mount. But he mounted instead, and while she stood spluttering and shaking off the snow which covered her, rode to Mr. Farnell's house. There he gave the reins to a boy who was clearing the steps, accosted with a haughty air Ward Farnell, who came to the door, and inquired for Mrs. Daskill.

"Come in," said the old man, with sarcastic courtesy. "My daughter will see you."

"I called to see my wife," replied Adolphus.

"To see her in my house you will have to see my daughter first," said the old man, with ironic complacency.

Adolphus went in, and Julia presently appeared.

"Good morning, Mr. Daskill," she said, confronting him with pale cheeks and eyes that pierced him with their cold, spiritual rays. With haughty politeness he returned her greeting, and asked to see his wife. "I do not think it best that you should see her," said Julia.

"I should say her husband was the best judge as to that," returned Adolphus.

Ward Farnell stood by, rubbing his hands with glee to see how proud and noble his daughter looked in this brief conflict of eye-beams keener than words. "Mr. Daskill," she said, "your wife has thrown herself upon our protection, and while she is in this house, I am the judge in all such matters."

Adolphus changed his tone a little. "I shall hope, then, to convince you that it will be best for her to see me."

"Mr. Daskill, you may hope to convince me of that when you come to me with the assurance that Mrs. Lafitte has left your house. Until then you shall never, with my consent, see the girl you have so wronged."

"Are you so harsh in your judgment, — so relentless, Miss Farnell?"

"I am relentless as fate in this, Mr. Daskill. I appealed to you once in vain. I gave you ample warning. You have proved yourself unworthy of the pure, confiding girl you won for a wife, and now, if you have lost her, the fault lies in your own misconduct. I hope you may repent, I hope you will yet endeavor to atone for the wrong you have done her, but don't seek her here while the wrong continues. Good morning, Mr. Daskill."

Without waiting to hear another word from him, she left the room. Ward Farnell grinned sarcastically as he held the door open for the visitor and saw him remount his horse.

CHAPTER XLVII.

WILL RAYBURN'S PLAN.

MR. FENWAY found William at the shop, and told him what had occurred during the interview with Adolphus.

"With my present feelings," he went on to say, "I can never consent to Marian's living with the man again; and of course I expect no mercy at his hands. Things look pretty dark. If you can see a ray of light for me, William, I shall be glad."

William remained silent and thoughtful. Miles continued.

"You know that everything I have is in this business, which it has cost me so much time and labor and anxiety to build up. I was just beginning to feel I had got it so established that I could lie a little later of a morning, in my advancing years. Now this thing comes up. I consider the property well worth twenty-five thousand dollars; but, sold under the hammer, it will not bring half that, — barely enough, with the homestead thrown in, to pay for this twelve or fifteen thousand dollar scrape Daskill has got me into. I don't feel like fighting; I won't fight. Neither will I raise money by mortgages, and go tottering through the remnant of my days under a burden of debt. No, I'll let things take their course. I can still shoe a horse and set a cart-tire. The law will very likely regard me as a partner in the Bubbling Run project. But I am thankful for one thing, — it's none of my stock that has been sold; not a dollar of any man's money has gone into my pocket. It will be a comfort to think of that," Miles added, with melancholy humor, "when I am rasping hoofs and hammering horse-nails."

William looked up with a cheerful smile, and said, —

“Nothing very bad can happen to a man who takes life in that spirit.”

“It will be hard for my little woman to come down. I think of her and Marian. The boys will soon be able to take care of themselves, though I had hoped to give them a thorough education. For my own part, I can take whatever happens and be content, provided I have been guilty of no intentional wrong toward any one. It seems to me that a clear conscience is an opening into the blue sky of Eternity itself. Everything else is transitory, — our trials, the longest of them, are so short.”

William listened with the deepest interest. He was smiling still, but there was a glistening light in his eyes and a tremor in his voice, as he replied, —

“I thank God for you, Mr. Fenway! You are the one Christian philosopher. I don't know another. Often, when I have been weak and discouraged, and it has seemed as if the strifes and vanities of the mad majority would prove too much for me, the thought of your life and example has been to me a pillar of strength. Well, there is Miles Fenway, I would say, and shut my eyes and ears to the hurly-burly, and be at peace. You among men — and a certain woman I know,” Will added, with love and reverence, as if his tongue trembled to touch the most delicate and sacred of themes, — “are to me a constant joy and satisfaction; though she does n't know it, and probably never will, and I might never have told you, but for this opportunity.”

“William, this is too much,” Miles faltered, with gratitude and deep humility.

“As for this present trouble about money matters,” Will resumed after a little while, “I think I see a ray of light. There is my uncle's note, in the first place; something will have to be done about it, I suppose, as soon as the old man can

break the snow blockade and leave his house. He isn't shovelled out yet : the boys refuse to work for him. His niggardliness with them gives you a little time. But on Monday, no doubt, he will move. We must be ready with a counter-movement; for you are not going to give up the fort before a shot is fired, Miles Fenway !”

“No, William, I'll hold it while there is hope. But I really don't see what I am to do.”

“Well, what I am going to say may be quite absurd. And perhaps I had better think about it awhile.”

“No, no,” said Miles, whose curiosity was roused. “I feel that you have an idea. Out with it !”

“The fellows here,” replied Will, “have a strong feeling that I saved them from making a bad speculation; and they want advise as to investing the money they were going to put into the Bubbling Run.”

“But you understand that I don't propose to borrow.”

“And I don't propose to have you. My plan is this: Form a company. Capital, say twenty-five thousand dollars, representing the full value of your manufacturing interest. Two hundred and fifty shares, at a hundred dollars each. Two hundred shares and over you retain, at least for the present. Thirty shares, if offered to the men in the shop, will be taken by them, I am sure, within three days. They know you, they know the business; it is not a speculation, but a well-established industry; and they become capitalists as well as laborers. Their wages will go on as at present; you will be entitled to a liberal salary, as the head of the concern; the net profits to be divided among the stockholders. I have thought of something of the kind before, but it was only a dream. Now it looks as if it might be realized. Nothing will so encourage and raise the self-respect of the men; and I am sure it will be the best thing for the shop.”

“But the thirty shares sold will provide for only three thousand dollars.”

"That is true. But the other ten or twelve shares, needed to pay off the note and the interest on it, can be disposed of in some way, if the plan promises success. Then see where you are. The Carolus note — the first thing that threatens — is taken care of. In six months, I have no doubt, the men will be ready to take as much more stock, if they can get it; and you may be glad to let them have it, — if Mr. Daskill presses you. Suppose he recovers the entire amount of what he claims as due from you as a partner in his oil scheme: persons enough outside the shop can be found to take shares in a business they know so well. You can let them in, if necessary, and still, at the very worst, have one hundred shares of stock left for yourself, after all your losses. This will be better than loading yourself with debt or allowing your business to be sacrificed. The plan is crude as yet; it requires shaping. But something may, perhaps, be made of it."

"I don't know," said Miles, sadly musing. "I should want to be pretty sure I was n't dragging anybody else down in my ruin. The plan is worth considering, however, and I wish you would put it on paper."

This William did, and submitted his draft to Mr. Fenway in the afternoon.

"Very ingenious," Miles said, giving it a careful examination; and, after some time spent in weighing advantages and objections, he gave his consent that it should be laid before the workmen.

That evening, accordingly, while the men were washing up and getting ready to go home, William invited them all to come into the office, where he explained the whole matter to them in Mr. Fenway's presence.

"Understand," he said, in conclusion, "this plan is entirely my own, and Mr. Fenway has not yet agreed to it. But he was willing that you should be consulted; and I think he would like to hear your mind about it."

The unanimity and heartiness with which the men approved the project and promised to take stock—not merely as a good investment, it was evident, but out of good-will to their employer—moved Mr. Fenway almost as much as anything that had happened during the day. They were eager to place everything they had at his disposal, on his own terms, which they were sure would be just. The thirty shares offered were all subscribed for before they left the shop.

“Well, William,” said Miles, with profound emotion, after they were gone, “it looks as if this was the thing to be done. Thanks to you, for I never should have thought it could be carried out. I only wish there was as good a prospect of Marian’s getting through her trouble.”

“On Monday,” said William, “we will have the whole matter put into legal form. Meanwhile I must see about the other ten shares.”

Old Carolus did not leave his house during the day; but towards night his paths were shovelled, and in the evening William called upon him. He found the old man gibbering over a slice of bacon, which he was trying to broil on some very inefficient coals in his open fireplace. A single tallow candle burned on the table.

“Where’s your housekeeper?” said William.

“Sick, by Jehosh!” squeaked the old man, turning his rasher. “Hasn’t been off her bed for two days. I have to take care of myself and her too. Mighty little care we both get.”

“Has the doctor seen her?” Will inquired.

“D—n the doctor!” was the old miser’s succinct commentary on that subject. He looked up through the smoky haze that filled the room. “Doctors ain’t quite so bad as ministers; but they’re bad enough. Don’t you never let one come a-nigh me when I’m sick; if I’m to die, le’ me die in peace. Promise me that, and I’ll remember you in my will. Set down, will ye? What do ye want?”

"To have a little talk with you, Uncle."

"About Miles Fenway's matter, I'll bet a dollar."

"You're right, Uncle."

"Too late. Note goes into bank for collection on Monday. I'll do anything else for you. Come, I'll share my slice of bacon with ye." And the old man put his supper on the table.

Will sat down opposite him, but excused himself from eating.

"You've nothing against Miles Fenway, have you?" he said.

"Not a thing; not the first thing. Only he's made a fool of himself—or allowed What's-his-name to make a fool of him—in that Bubbling Run iniquity."

"Well, he's out of that. He has broken with Mr. Daskill."

"Good news! good news! Only he ain't out of it. He can't be out of it till the note is paid."

"It is going to be paid, Uncle Carolus." And Will went on in his plain, honest fashion to tell the old man how. "Now," he added, "I want to take ten shares. You offered to lend me money once, when I had no special occasion for it, and there was no certainty that you would ever get it back again. I have occasion for it now, and I can give you security for the repayment. I will take shares in the fork business, and put the stock into your hands."

"You want to borrow money of me!" screamed the old man.

"Yes; my mother will help me to three hundred dollars, and I want seven hundred more."

"Seven hundred! Great Jehoshaphat! I have n't so much money in the world."

Will smiled. "You can give me an order on Miles Fenway; he will take it."

"Take it? Guess he will, if he has a chance! Where's the man who would n't honor my order? I'm known around the corner. I've a nest-egg; I've a plum. I'm not so poor as people might take me to be who know my relations."

"I wish your wealth were as honorable as the poverty of your relations, Uncle," said Will. "I don't consider your nest-egg, your plum, as you call it, anything to brag of."

"Sour grapes, young man!" snarled the old miser over his viand; and with shaking hands he proceeded to adapt a morsel to his gums by chopping it into bits on his plate.

"I hoped, for Mr. Fenway's sake, to carry out this plan; and also for the sake of the men, who I think can do nothing better with the money they got ready for investment in the Bubbling Run. But this is something I shall not ask you twice for, even if the whole thing falls through." Will rose, with a proud and stern look. "You once offered to do me a favor, and now you have had the chance. Let me see old Mattie a minute, then I'll go."

"See her and be d—d! She's in the next room there."

The door was open. Will left the old man munching his bread and meat, and went to the bedside of the sick woman. After a little while he returned.

"She's in a bad way, Uncle. I don't think medicine will do her much good, but she might be made more comfortable. Will you let mother come over and see what she can do for her?"

"Do for *her*? Yes, if she wants to. But mind, not for *me*! I won't be beholden to either of you. What are you looking at me so for?" said old Carolus.

"It is sad to see you in this condition," said Will, — "so old and friendless, so rich and so niggardly! Your last years desolate, when there should be a halo surrounding them. I was thinking of that, Uncle. Good night."

And to the eyes of the astonished and trembling Carolus, a radiance went out of the room with the young man.

Will had not thought that even Miles Fenway's prosperity was worth purchasing by one word of flattery or the least abatement of his self-respect. If he could not have the help of his uncle on high and manly terms, he would not have it at all.

His hope was now in Geordie Lorkins; and, having gone home and sent his mother to old Mattie, he went around to Geordie's house. But Geordie, though expected home that evening by the train, had not arrived, probably on account of the snow blockade.

An hour later Mrs. Rayburn returned, and found her son sitting rather gloomily by the fire, unable to see the way clear out of his little pecuniary difficulty. She told him what she had done for old Mattie, and repeated some of his uncle's ill-natured remarks, then took a scrap of folded paper from her pocket.

"Here's a note he wrote when I was there," she said. "It can't be anything very pleasant, for he was dreadfully cross when he gave it to me."

Will unfolded the stingy little scrap, and read, in his uncle's characteristic scrawl, these words : —

"MILES FENWAY, — *Pay to William Rayburn seven hundred dollars, on my account.*

C. CAROLUS."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MRS. CHILGROVE'S PLAN.

MARIAN had not recovered from the shock of that terrible night, when, on Sunday afternoon, she was removed to her father's house. It was a comfort to repose her weary heart and languid limbs under the old roof again. But she missed Julia's gentle nursing; and now, when she had most need of perfect quiet, Mrs. Fenway's stormily affectionate and anxious moods kept her in a state of agitation.

"O mother, mother, don't talk about it any more!" the poor girl pleaded, tired of the agony and the strife.

"Well, I won't, dear." But Mrs. Fenway could not quit the exciting theme; she still held her daughter to the rack, — now raving about the wrong and ruin the husband's perfidy had wrought, and now weakly excusing him, from motives more contemptible than her spite. She could not bear the idea of Marian's losing her proud position as mistress of the Folly; and, in opposition to her husband's positive commands, she began to fret and contrive to bring Mr. Daskill and Marian again together.

Adolphus did not immediately seek another interview, perhaps on account of his trouble with Mr. Fenway; or it may be that Mrs. Chilgrove's influence restrained him. That lady did in fact triumphantly remain in possession of the Folly until the scandal threatened to ruin Mr. Daskill's business as well as his reputation. Then, to the great excitement of village gossips, she was observed going about in search of a boarding-place.

Circumstance seems often to favor the wicked as well as the just; and it so happened that after a dozen doors had been almost too abruptly closed in her face, a haven was opened to her. As she was passing a weather-browned, little old house one forenoon, a strange-looking, skinny, and shrivelled face — whether that of a man or woman, she could at first scarcely tell — appeared at a window and screamed. She paused, ready for any adventure, and quickly recognized the face as one she had often seen in the streets of Waybrook.

“What is the matter?” she inquired.

“My old woman is dead; that’s what’s the matter.”

The speaker was, in fact, Mr. Carolus, who, rising late that morning, and going to old Mattie’s room, had found her cold. Hardened sinner as he was, the discovery had startled him into the act of thrusting his head from the window, and calling to the first passer-by.

“Send somebody — I don’t care who! My money will pay.”

But instead of sending anybody, Mrs. Chilgrove, with a secret purpose swiftly formed, entered the house.

“Are you alone?” she inquired.

“All sole alone, now she is gone. By Jehosh!” swore the old man, with unusual emotion, “she was the only friend I had. I’ve quarrelled with her a thousand times and made up again. I had left everything to her in my will, and now she has died and upset it!”

“Poor old man!” said Mrs. Chilgrove compassionately.

“She has kept my house for fifteen years. Now what in time she wanted to go first for, and leave me in the lurch, is more’n I know. She was around the house yesterday. She darned my stockings last evening, — there’s her work-basket now. A living human being a few hours ago — and now what is she? We eat and drink, and pine and fret, a little

while, a little while, and then the ground covers us. A little breath in the body makes such a difference! I can't understand it! I can't understand it!"

"Poor old man!" again said the lady, almost affectionately, so soft and winning was her sympathy. "You need somebody to comfort and care for you."

"I s'pose I do, if anybody does. She's been ailing — up and down — all winter. But I never thought she would peg out before I did. She might have stayed by and seen me tucked away. Then she'd have been the richest woman in this county. I calculated on that; blamed if I did n't think I should chuckle in my grave to see my old Mattie hated and envied and flattered for her money. Now here I am, old and tottering, my staff broken. Who the devil I'm going to get to take her place is more than I know."

"Poor old man, leave all to me. I will see that you are cared for."

Carolus had sunk down in a chair. She leaned caressingly towards him, and laid her arm over his shoulder. He looked up at her sharply.

"Ain't you the woman that made the row between What's-his-name and his wife?"

"I have had charge of Mr. Daskill's sick son, — a poor, unfortunate boy, whom I would never have left but for those foolish slanders. Do I look like a wicked woman?"

Bending compassionately over him, gazing sadly down into his face, she looked like anything but that.

"I guess you're as good as the average," said the old man. "Everybody has a selfish end to gain. There was only one kind soul in the world for me. There she lies. She did n't care for my money; and that's the reason I willed it to her. The will's in my safe there, — good for nothing but to kindle the fire now. I was never so cut up about anything. I'm eighty years old, and my old Mattie is dead."

"Poor old man ! poor old man !" said the lady soothingly. She glanced around the desolate room. "You have had no breakfast? Let me get your breakfast for you ; then I will have your faithful Mattie decently cared for. Poor old man ! I pity you."

Whether she pitied him or not, he was pleased to have her near him. She might have the claws of a cat, but her purring was a comfort.

She stayed and took care of him, and ordered everything, to the unspeakable disgust of some excellent people. Mrs. Rayburn, who had of late looked in to see old Mattie occasionally, declared that she would never again set foot in her brother's house while that creature remained. And the Wintergreen sisters, who, animated by their ancient grudge, attended the funeral, less out of respect for the deceased than from hatred of Mrs. Chilgrove, got the old reprobate in a corner, and informed him—with their eighteen auburn ringlets all bobbing at once before his eyes—that she was a vile, deceitful thing, just as they had always said, and that she fawned upon him for his money.

"Vile, is she? deceitful, is she?" snapped the old cynic. "So are you all. You would fawn on me, if you thought there was a chance of getting my money. I don't care a tinker's granny what she does it for ; I like it."

The funeral was an affair of the undertaker. Carolus vowed that he would have no praying or cant over his old Mattie. But he provided a costly casket, and a train of carriages for those neighbors who came out of kindness or curiosity to follow her to the grave. So the old housekeeper died and was buried, and Mrs. Chilgrove reigned in her stead.

One afternoon, not long after this change, William Rayburn called at his uncle's to deposit with him the security for his loan of seven hundred dollars. The old man had

gone out, but her serene Highness, the new housekeeper, received him graciously.

"Sit down, will you?" she said with a tranquil smile. "Come, Mr. Rayburn, you and I ought to be friends. We can help each other. Besides, I always liked you. And now, since I have been in this house, you have let me alone, while almost everybody else has been trying to get me driven out. What harm am I doing to them, or to Mr. Carolus? You can see for yourself that he is living much more comfortably than he used to."

Indeed, William could not help noticing a great improvement in the appearance of the house.

"It is n't what you are doing for him that any one objects to, but your motives," he replied. "From what they know of you, they don't think you capable of a benevolent action."

The lady colored slightly, but laughed.

"Oh, I have some wicked object in view, of course! Well, I'll frankly acknowledge to you that I am not so rich and benevolent that I can afford to take care of an old man for nothing. It is not amusing. But, believe me or not, I mean to do him good and not harm. I can do you a service, too, of the greatest importance; do you know it?"

Will, who had sat down, regarded the lady with interest, as he answered quietly, —

"I don't think of any service I desire at your hands."

"Perhaps not. You are prejudiced against me. You think I caused the separation between Mr. Daskill and his wife. You should thank me for that. You are the only man in the world she cares for (I know what I am saying), and now you can marry her if you like. A divorce will be a mere matter of form. They never belonged together. I have done nobody any harm in that case, either. I am not so bad as people think."

William made no reply, but kept his eyes upon her with a

steady, searching expression, which made the lady drop her own.

"You are a strange man," she said. "You make me want to tell you everything. Only a man, and a man like you, can understand a woman like me."

"I think I understand you," said William.

"And you detest me?"

"Oh, no; I detest nobody. You excuse your conduct to yourself. And where you are not too much influenced by your selfishness or your hatred, you can do a good action."

"I will prove to you that I can," the lady replied, after a pause. "Your uncle had made his will, giving everything to old Mattie. Now he is anxious to make another. If he does, you will get nothing. I suppose you know that. But if he dies intestate, your mother and you are his natural heirs. Now, I can prevent his making a will, if I like. That is what I can do for you."

"But you don't propose to do it for nothing."

"Would you expect me to?" Mrs. Chilgrove smiled, with her dilating eyes fixed on the young man. "Out of a hundred thousand dollars secured to you by me, you can afford to give me twenty thousand. That leaves you a fortune. While without my help you will get what you did in the old will, probably, — one dollar to your name."

"Do you expect me to become a party to such a bargain as this?"

"You need not sign any agreement. I will trust your word. I make a frank proposal. You accept it?"

"Mrs. Chilgrove, it is not a frank proposal. You let me see about as much of your motive as we see of the moon when it is new, — just a rim, but within that rim we sometimes see dimly the full orb."

The lady dropped her eyes again as she asked, "What do you see?"

"I see that what you propose to me is only a small part of the game you are playing. You promise to prevent my uncle's making a new will, while you mean to use all your influence to induce him to make one."

"How can that be?"

"It is simple enough. The will he is to make, if he can be prevailed upon, will be in your favor. You can no doubt get it, if you have time enough. If he dies too soon, a bargain with me may be useful. In one case you get all, in the other you still get a part. You wish to secure yourself on both sides. I don't say that I blame you. As we are, so we act. A leopard is a leopard, and a lamb is a lamb."

Mrs. Chilgrove was thrown into some confusion as he was speaking. But when he closed she said, with seeming sincerity, —

"Mr. Rayburn, you are the most extraordinary man I ever saw. It is impossible to deceive you."

"But you have found it possible to deceive most men? Well, I suppose that is your nature too."

"Men have deceived me and I have deceived them. I have had my revenge." And a sparkle of wickedness shot from the dilated eyes. "I was an innocent girl once, and I might have remained so, but I had my living to get and small means of getting it, and when I would have been honest, I was met on every side by bad men who practised their arts upon me. They did not find me a passive prey. I have repaid them."

"Yes; and you have involved innocent persons in your revenge. Have you no remorse on their account?"

"Has anybody remorse on my account? My house is fired, and sparks fly from it to my neighbor's. I can't help it."

"But, Mrs. Chilgrove, had you no compassion, no regret, when you found what you had done to one who had never

intentionally injured you, — who really wished to be your friend? But you deceived and betrayed her.”

“She need n’t have gone out in the storm. But I was glad she went. Do you think that, with my experience of the world, I consider a human life of very much account? I had kept poison by me for a month.”

“For whom?”

“I didn’t know, — whether for her, or him, or myself, or all of us, — and I did n’t much care.”

So this woman, so reticent with others, talked, as if some strong fatality impelled her, to this young man.

“I am sorry! I am very sorry!” was his answer, uttered with profound emotion. “Sorry for you, Mrs. Chilgrove; sorry to see so strong and brave a woman so perverted. Geordie Lorkins thought you such a cold creature. Little did he know what a firebrand he was bringing home with him. Why did you fling yourself down in the road before his horses? But I see the guile in that too. A proud and desperate woman like you would not beg, and you knew that if you asked for help you might not get it. But few men could pass a woman lying in the snow, at night, without at least stopping to see if she was dead; and you trusted to your powers of interesting in your behalf any person who might take you up.”

“What you say is precisely so,” the lady replied, with a smile. “I feel as if my life was an open book to you; that is why I am so frank. Now will you go off and betray me? try to deprive me of this home?”

“No, I shall not injure you. I can’t promise to further your schemes, but you will find I am a friend to your best interests. I would so gladly help you make yourself over into a true and noble woman!”

He gave her his hand. Tears filled her eyes.

“If I could have had such a man as you for a friend when I was young and innocent!” she said in a quivering voice.

Will could not help wondering, as he went away, whether a woman like her could ever have been innocent.

"She is as she is, God pity her!" And his prophetic soul added, "She will never change her spots."

He carried away with him the paper he had called to leave with his uncle, and it was not long before the old man came into the office to get it. This little matter of business settled, Will said, —

"There is another thing I feel that I ought to talk to you about."

"What's that?"

"Your will, uncle."

"That's none of your business and never will be," said Carolus sharply.

"If you don't make a will, it will be my business very sure," Will replied. But I prefer that you should make one. I don't want a dollar more of your money than you wish me to have. I desire that you should do with it just what you please. Don't delay. You are old and infirm. While you are hesitating, your feet may suddenly slip from under you, and I shall have the disagreeable feeling that I have got what you never intended for me."

"By the great Jehosh!" shrieked the old man, bringing his stick down smartly on the office floor. "I don't understand you, William."

"No, Uncle. But when you reflect upon it, you must at least see that my advice is disinterested, and I hope you will heed it. You have no old Mattie to leave your property to now; but there are plenty of worthy people and worthy objects. If you wish to astonish us, why not choose some really deserving persons to share your wealth? Then of course you will be just to those who have claims upon you, whether they are worthy or not."

"Ha! you mean my relatives?"

"Your relatives have no claims upon you. Come, now, Uncle ; I want you to free your mind entirely of the notion that I would speak one word, or turn my hand over, to get your money."

"I can't believe you are such a d—d fool, William !"

"Well, I am just that kind of fool ; though I don't think the epithet you use is quite fitting."

"What do you mean, then ? Who has claims on me ?"

"Your present housekeeper, for one. I hope you pay her handsomely for what she is doing for you ; if not, she should get something in your will. You know as well as I do what she is working for. Of course you will give her something. But, Uncle Carolus," Will added significantly, "if you would have your days long in the land, don't make it for anybody's interest that they should be shortened."

"What in the devil do you mean by that ?" The old man was really startled.

"Wholesome counsel, that is all. If I thought you cared for my opinion, I should like to go on and tell you what I think would be a very good object to which your money might be applied. This town needs a free library. With half your wealth you could endow one munificently. It would be better for you to do it while you are still living ; so that in your last years you might enjoy the satisfaction of having done a noble deed and earned the gratitude of a whole community. But if you can't bring your mind to that, then do it by your bequest."

Without a word of reply, the old man nodded, grimaced, got upon his three props, and went jerking and tottering out of the door.

CHAPTER XLIX.

GEORDIE LORKINS BRINGS NEWS.

MR. DASKILL'S business had been in a bad way long before people began to find it out. In buying the Folly, he had left Goldfinch & Co.'s mortgage upon it, and he had other debts. The community was as completely deceived in him as it had been in Ward Farnell; and he was deceived in himself. Sanguine, self-confident, extravagantly ambitious, he received hope into his counsels when he should have listened to the whispers of prudence, and mistook his wishes for facts.

"Trouble with Daskill is," Geordie Lorkins use to say, "his eyes are bigger 'n his belly. He more 'n half believes his own lies. He 's got so much imagination he can't stick to the truth; he 's like the man who went out to shingle a barn one morning when the fog was so thick he could n't see when he got to the edge of the roof, but shingled 'way out into the fog. He talks about projecting great schemes; he does project 'em, in just that way."

Adolphus had hoped by the oil speculation to make a great fortune for himself, and incidentally, perhaps, for others. He had entered into it, and drawn his father-in-law into it, with that large, unflinching confidence, characteristic of such men, which often passes for courage, but is really rashness, — a rank weed that thrives in soil where prudence and conscience do not grow. By the sale of his own private block of stock, he had managed to continue living extravagantly and keep up a show of prosperity. But that sale, sustained as

long as possible by rose-colored representations, had now stopped. The fact could not be concealed that the boring was a failure; and the time came when favorable false reports, invented by Daskill and industriously circulated by his agents, ceased to excite anything but contempt. The sale could not be revived; and honest stockholders, while they clung to the hope he confidently held out, — that the boring would be resumed in the spring, and was sure to succeed, — felt a growing conviction that they had been duped.

It was the failure of his scheme which had driven Adolphus to break with his father-in-law; and it now prevented him from making up his quarrel with Marian. Lastly, it was the cause of a suit begun by him and his uncle against Mr. Fenway, to recover six thousand dollars, which they claimed they had advanced for him as a partner in making the second payment due on the property, and in meeting other expenses.

Miles, who had an honest man's horror of a lawsuit, turned pale when the summons was served on him. He had to the last hoped that his son-in-law would not be guilty of this injustice. It was a consolation to know that every man in the shop was ready to stand by him in the fight, if fight there was to be. William said, "Wait a little while, and see what will turn up." The first thing that turned up was Geordie Lorkins, who in his last trip had visited the oil district, and who brought home news.

"Tell ye what," said Geordie, coming into the office like a fresh breeze, and finding Miles and William in consultation, "that there Dolph Daskill is a bigger rascal than I supposed. I've been to Bubbling Run, and learnt a thing or two. There may be ile there, — shouldn't wonder if there was, — but they hain't struck it, and they hain't got money enough to strike it. They can't even pay the men that worked for 'em last fall; and there's a mortgage on their engine and boring machine. What's more, it's all a lie about their pay-

ing so much for the property. The owner offered it for one quarter what Daskill says he gave for it, till all at once, after he had talked with Uncle Narabone, he put up his figgers. That meant a swindle for somebody. I believe every dollar that's ever been paid on that property has come out of you, Mr. Fenway; if the owner gets anything more, he gets it in stock. Narabone had n't any money; Daskill had n't any money; and they never could have started the speculation if't had n't been for you. They got your four thousand dollars, and they've got a good deal of other folks's money since; but I don't believe a dollar of the original expense has come out of their pockets. I talked with men out there who know Narabone, and have kept watch of his speculation; I talked with the owner too; and finally I run aginst Narabone himself. He's got a mouth like an alligator, eyes like a fish, and a voice that sounds as if it had warts on it,—a sort of a croak. He was swelling around there, and, taking me for a stranger, he fastened on to me, and tried to interest me in the property. I just let him palaver,—said 'H'm!' and 'Jes so!' to everything, till bimeby I'd heard about enough, and I opened fire.

“‘Guess ye may as well put the brakes on to your train of conversation,’ says I; ‘for I find ye can’t tell me anything about Bubbling Run that you don’t make up as you go along. I know more about it, and more about you, than you imagine. I know your nephew, Dolph Daskill. I know the former owner of the property, and I know the price he offered it for ’fore you concluded to buy it for four times as much and make an honest man over in Waybrook pay for it. I know lots of fools who have been taken in by your humbug, besides. Now what ye got to say?’ says I. By mighty! he hadn’t anything to say. He shet up like a telescope. He looked as if he would like to crawl into a knot-hole, and clap the knot in after him.”

Geordie admitted that the fraud in the purchase of the land had been carefully covered up, but so confident was he that it could be uncovered, that Miles, who placed great reliance on his shrewdness, took heart, and resolved to stand a lawsuit.

"They're trying to bluff ye," said Geordie. "But that's a game two can play at. The way to treat such fellers is to sue 'em in return for the money they've already swindled you out of. I don't believe they'll let the thing go to a jury. If they do, they'll wish they had n't; they'll turn tail and ki-yi, with their mouths full of quills, like puppies from a hedgehog."

"I believe you're right," said Miles. "If Daskill wants the law, he shall have enough of it. I'll bring a counter-suit, and Marian shall begin an action for divorce at the same time. She shall be free from him."

Marian meanwhile was waiting for the breath of spring to restore her shattered health. Will had scarcely seen her since she returned to her father's house; only once or twice they met, as she rode out with her mother on the first rare, balmy days. She was pale and languid, but a lovely flush overspread the delicate fairness of her features, and she smiled upon him, oh, so sweetly and wistfully! And her mother gave him a decidedly encouraging nod.

CHAPTER L.

JULIA FARNELL.

GENTLEMANLY leisure and freedom from business cares agreed with Ward Farnell's constitution. He had grown corpulent since his failure. As he sat and read his newspaper, it took the largest chair in the house to hold him, and another to support his feet. Excessive floridness of countenance was developed, with a tendency to special redness and sponginess of nose. Incipient veininess of cheek and pendency of jowl were also observable. It was a wonder to everybody how Julia could keep him in such remarkably fine condition on her paltry ten dollars a week. He had long since given up the unworthy thought of bettering the family fortunes by any exertions of his own. Vast mental capacity still waited in that thinly thatched dome for an opportunity to make its impress on society; but an unappreciative world neglected Ward Farnell. Occasion did not come to seek him, and he did not go out to seek Occasion: he was a man of too much portliness and dignity for that. His schemes for rearing colossal enterprises in the future gave place by degrees to reminiscences of immense fortunes which he had barely missed making in the past. He had seen the time when he could have bought up a large part of the present site of the city of Buffalo for a hundred dollars; and he had once thought of securing the whole water-front of Chicago, when it could have been had for a song. Then his imagination would revel in visions of boundless wealth, secured by some such happy speculation.

He still liked to complain ; and it was edifying to hear him expatiate on the deterioration of things in general on this planet since the good old times which he remembered. With all their new-fangled varieties of fruits, there were no such pears now as then, and certainly no such peaches. There used to be apples almost as large as his head ; and flavor ? apples had no flavor now. He was not so old but he could remember when there were pretty girls ; and aged people were venerable ; and tailors could fit clothes ; and there was a certain sweetness in the air in spring ; and pinks and roses had a beauty long since lost. There were great men in those days ; and he delighted to run on with a long list of the names of once noted individuals which his younger hearers had never heard ; ending with a sad sigh and a prodigious frown, indicating that there was only one of the old giants left.

Beef was tender in that golden age, and people had teeth. But it was years since he had tasted chop or steak with anything like the primeval sweetness in it. He wondered whether grass was as succulent as it used to be, or whether the fault was in the modern breeds of stock.

"There 's nothing like the old-fashioned sheep and cattle for roasting and broiling, after all," says Ward Farnell, with a reminiscent smack.

Even that poor creature-comfort, whiskey, had degenerated, and he had to drink an ever-increasing quantity of it to make up for the deficient quality. Julia, who did not understand the necessity, feared he was taking too much. She did not clearly see the benefit it was to him ; and alas ! with their straitened means, it could not be afforded. So she made a strenuous effort to keep it out of the house. Ward Farnell wiped a pathetic tear, and remarked that the cruelty of daughters nowadays was something unknown in his youth, but finally yielded — or appeared to yield — to her earnest entreaties.

Still the red ensign did not disappear from the van of his noble features; and Julia noticed that the marketing, which was mostly intrusted to him, became unusually expensive. To remedy that, she told him to get things charged at the grocer's and butcher's, and put into his hands only the money necessary to pay certain bills. Great was her dismay when she found that the money was spent, while the bills remained unpaid. He kept no accounts, and could offer no explanation of the mystery.

He had of late fallen into the habit of taking early morning walks, which he had discovered to be good for his constitution; and certainly he always appeared a deal fresher and more cheerful on his return home than when he set out. One night there had been a light fall of snow, and after he came in from his before-breakfast ramble, Julia had occasion to go into the street. There, conspicuously impressed in the soft white veil of purity that covered everything else, were the prints of a solitary pair of feet, — broad, short-stepping, quaintly picturesque, — leading to the tavern steps, and back again to the house.

The wretched daughter's heart was rung at this discovery. Then she tried the experiment of giving him no money at all. He stole it from her purse, and made the house exceedingly warm for her when he could n't steal it. Finding remonstrance and precaution in vain, she one day gave him some money, saying quietly, "Here, father, don't go to the tavern any more, but fill your jug: that will be cheaper."

To see the father whom she had once venerated, and for whom she still cherished a tender filial regard, growing thus besotted in body and mind, wore upon her more than her work. And this was wearisome enough. Her labor at the school was all she ought to have undertaken. But out of school hours she was a slave to the family. She was housekeeper, seamstress, dress-maker, milliner. It was a marvel to see how, with every

change of season or of style, by a little reshaping of old materials, with the addition perhaps of a little fresh ribbon or bit of velvet, she kept the girls' bonnets presentable ; while last year's gowns went through equally wonderful transformations. Hortense was beginning to be something of a help about housework and needle-work ; but Genevieve had never yet awakened from her dream of a world of music in which toil and care were not.

Overworked, unsupported by suitable companionship, thwarted by her own father in her endeavors to maintain the family comfort and respectability, Julia — it may as well be confessed — had terrible hours of loneliness and depression. She, too, independent as she appeared, had a heart that hungered for sympathy. Little things sometimes affected her strangely. The sight of their nearest neighbor coming towards her on the street would sometimes fill her with a strange, fluttering joy ; but she was pretty sure to go home and have a good cry after it. This was partly, perhaps, because she could not understand his conduct towards her. Sincerely as she had befriended him in his affair with Marian, he had treated her with scarcely more than passing courtesy since his return home. What did she expect of him that he did not give ? Not that he should make love to her, very sure. She believed that he had never forgotten, and could never forget, his first love ; and to one in her situation, marriage with one in his was out of the question. After he brought Marian to her that night, she hoped that his intercourse with the family would be renewed. But, though he stopped to talk with her on the street about the unhappy young wife, he did not again call at the house. And now there was a prospect that Marian would speedily be divorced. It would have been a joy to Julia to bring the two lovers again together ; and she could not understand why, when she thought of them, she was sometimes so wretched.

She still possessed the ardent friendship of her pupil, Priscilla Rocknam; and this led to almost the only recreation in which she indulged. Mr. Rocknam visited his daughter frequently, and always managed, before leaving Waybrook, to take her and the favorite teacher to ride. Of agreeable manners and intelligent conversation, it was impossible not to like him; and the poor tired girl enjoyed these brief respite from constant toil and care. But being the cause of Ward Farnell's waiting once or twice for his supper, they made him miserably jealous. He could not bear that Julia should neglect him a moment for anybody else; he had become reconciled to her absence from home in the way of business (for he now recognized the fact that it was her hand that fed him), but in the way of pleasure it was unpardonable.

There was to be a week's vacation early in May. Priscilla's father was coming to take her home, and she began long beforehand to importune Julia to go with them and spend the holidays. Of course she had Mr. Rocknam's cordial approval of the plan; and as the time approached, Julia found herself in such absolute need of rest and a change of scene that she accepted the invitation.

"I don't see how you can go, any way in the world," said Ward Farnell, when she told him of her intention.

"I think I can be spared for a few days," replied Julia, with a quiet persistence, which irritated the old gentleman.

"Your place is at home. Your duties are here. Why should you go gadding?" he demanded hotly.

"Gadding? O father! have n't I kept at home? Don't I attend to my duties? I thought you and the girls could get along without me for a little while." And with all her resolution, she could not keep back her tears.

"If they can, I can't," cried Ward Farnell, flushed and angry. "I need you. I've a right to you. You're away from me enough, as it is."

She was driven to retort, "Why am I away from you? Is it not to earn the bread which you will not earn yourself? Yes, and the drink which you will have in spite of me, and which causes you to treat me in this unjust and unkind way. I know it is not *you* who say such things to me. You are not yourself when you begrudge me a little relief from the monotony and weariness of the life I lead."

She could not have helped this outburst, even if she had foreseen that she was to remember it ever after with shame and remorse. She had borne all she could; and for a moment she forgot that he was her father.

"Ungrateful, — to fling that in my teeth! to taunt me with the bitter truth that I am old and infirm, and that you earn my bread. Why should n't you earn it? Have n't I toiled for my children all my life?"

So saying, he turned to the cupboard and mixed a glass of grog. Julia, who remembered too well the time when, soon after his failure, he vowed that no daughter of his should soil her hands with work, answered, not in anger, but with breaking grief in her accents, "I will labor for your support, father, as long as I can. But have a care! I can't endure everything. I will cheerfully wear out my body for you; but don't — if you would keep me with you — don't wear out my spirit with needless pains and discouragements. Don't you see that my strength is nearly gone? My patience — God forgive me! — is going too. Father, I shall die if I don't get a few days' rest away from here, and I shall take it."

It was with many misgivings that she kept that resolution. She planned everything for his comfort in her absence; but he continued grouty over his grievance, and bade her but a gruff good-by. She kissed the girls, and gave them her parting instructions; then, with tears and a heavy heart, went to enjoy as best she might the recreation her friends had prepared for her.

Mr. Rocknam had come for her and Priscilla with a fine span of bays. The afternoon, though cool, was lovely, and fragrant with the sweet odors of spring. The hillsides were green again, peach-trees and cheery-trees were in blossom, wayside willows were fringed with the first tender leafage, the forest tops were thickening, birds were singing in every field and orchard, and frogs in every marsh. The ride was inspiring, her companions were delightful, and Julia could not long remember her sorrow in the midst of so much beauty.

Two hours' ride brought them to Remus, and Mr. Rocknam's home, a lovely village, and a delightful abode. A kind old housekeeper received them, and two younger daughters of Mr. Rocknam — beautiful girls — welcomed their sister and her friend with mingled diffidence and glee.

Julia was charmed with everything. The modern house and grounds were pervaded by an air of comfort and cultivated taste, and a quiet home feeling, soothing to her soul; and there she passed five memorable days, to which she would ever afterwards have looked back with gratitude and delight, but for the event which abruptly terminated her visit.

The sixth day was Sunday, and on Monday she was expecting to return with Priscilla to the school, and to the old round of duties from which she knew not when she should ever again escape. She declined an invitation to attend church services in the morning, wishing to spend a few hours entirely alone, — not that she had been oppressed with attentions during her stay, but she had felt that she owed something of her time and thought to her pupil; and morning walks and talks with Priscilla, afternoon rides with her and her father and the girls, and evenings spent in music and conversation, had left her little of that perfect rest and privacy for which she longed.

She had seen Mr. Rocknam drive away with the family.

She alone remained in the house. The day was one of exceeding brightness and sweetness; the church-bells were ringing, the garden was full of blossoms and jubilant birds, and melody and fragrance were wafted in at the open windows. Light and happiness would have filled her heart, but for an aching sense of the toil and care and loneliness awaiting her at home.

She went out into the garden, and was walking there amid a cloud of pink and white blossoms, — for the pear-trees were now in bloom, and the apple-tree buds were bursting, — when, hearing a footstep on the gravel, she turned, and saw Mr. Rocknam coming towards her.

“I supposed you were at church,” she said, as he apologized for the intrusion.

He replied, “I thought there was no use of my being where my heart was not. My heart is here to-day. Miss Farnell, your stay with us has been too short; I can’t bear to think of your going back to-morrow.”

“The thought is not so pleasant to me as I wish it were,” she frankly confessed. “I have had a delightful visit, and I shall not soon forget all your kindness to me.”

“Miss Farnell,” he said after a pause, breaking off a stem of pear-blossoms and twirling it in his fingers, “why need you go back there at all?”

“Oh!” she exclaimed, “my father and sisters! my school!”

“You can’t expect to remain in the school always,” he said, standing with modest manly embarrassment before her; while she turned away, trying to appear as if she had not understood his meaning. “Your work is too hard there; Priscilla sees it, and I see it. The truth is, she and my little girls want you all to themselves, — not as a teacher, dear Miss Farnell,” he added, with a tenderness restrained by the most perfect respect, “but as — as a mother. Will you take their

mother's place? Will you make me the most grateful of father's, the happiest of men?"

"O Mr. Rocknam!" said Julia, bursting into tears.

He took her hand. Was this man then truly in love with her? But, in proposing for that hand, he had put his children's interest foremost. All the better, if she was to accept him: for, agreeable as he was to her, greatly as she respected him, he did not—perhaps never could—possess her supreme love.

"It is impossible!" she said, as he gently urged an answer. "You don't know my life. I can never leave my father and sisters."

"I have thought of all that," he replied. "You need not leave them. Do you know why I took you to visit that cottage of mine yesterday? and why I was so pleased that you were pleased with it? Because I design that for your father's family."

"But I can never consent that they shall live upon your bounty!"

"Well, they need not. I have foreseen your objection, and provided against it. I can give your father pleasant employment in my mills, with an ample salary. You will have him and your sisters near you, and the more you do for them the better I shall be pleased."

"But my father's habits!" said Julia, ashamed and distressed. "I fear they have quite unfitted him for any business."

"To restore his self-respect will be the first step towards reforming his habits. A place of trust will restore his self-respect. You see, Miss Farnell, I have thought of all your objections."

"Oh, no! there is one—one which you don't seem to have considered. You have my profoundest gratitude, my sincerest friendship, but —"

"But not your love? Say it frankly, Miss Farnell."

"I — I have not thought of you as a lover."

"I could not expect that. I am sixteen years older than you; and no doubt I seem to have outgrown the romance of youth and passion."

She lifted her eyes to his, and felt a thrill of surprise to see how young and ardent he looked. He smiled seriously, as he went on.

"But I bring to you a whole heart, and a love which I know is pure and strong and permanent. I believe I can win yours: will you let me try?"

What should she say? If there was one to whom her whole heart and soul could go out, at a look or word of encouragement, why speak of it, why think of it, since that word or look would never be given? Why not solace herself with this proffered sincere affection, and escape from poverty and weariness of life into this peaceful, happy home?

After a brief struggle she was about to speak. She turned her eyes upon the strong, good man who had honored her. I hardly know what words she would have spoken; but just then sounded another footstep on the gravel; she looked over Mr. Rocknam's shoulder, and saw hurrying towards her one whom she recognized with a cry of astonishment, —

"William Rayburn!"

CHAPTER LI.

SOMEBODY'S BLUNDER.

TRANQUIL as was that day, the night before had been wild with wind and flying clouds, and Waybrook had been visited by a terrific occurrence.

One by one the lights had been put out, and the good people of the village had settled down to their usual Saturday-evening repose. Sour-faced Mrs. Wetherspun had laid her nightcapped head on the pillow, and once more scolded her good man to sleep, for his "headstrong reeklessness in rushin' into the Bubblin' Run," contrary to her better judgment. The Wintergreen sisters had put their eighteen auburn-gray ringlets in papers, taken their Sunday garments out of the "camfire chist," and retired. All was silent in the other part of the house too, where Lottie was, happy with her husband and children, — for Geordie was at home, and a second baby had arrived in time to prevent the first from being spoiled. Ward Farnell had tossed off his go-to-bed toddy, growled his last growl over Julia's unfilial absence, and blown out his candle. At last only one light was visible, and that was in Daskill's store.

The roaring wind, the flying clouds, the alternations of moonlight and shadow on orchard and waterfall, suited William Rayburn's mood, and he was out walking long after his mother was asleep. He saw Ward Farnell's light go out, and drew a long breath as he passed on. Why had his neighbor's house looked so lonely to him these past few days?

He walked around by Mr. Fenway's house. All was dark

there too. He thought of Miles, grown careworn over his lawsuits and Marian's divorce case. By what strange fatality had so good a man fallen upon such evil days? "He is lying awake there now, thinking of his precious son-in-law, and maybe having a curtain lecture," Will thought.

He knew the room where Marian slept. It was the same she had in the old days when he used often to walk by the house late at night, and gaze up at her window with sighs from a tortured heart. The wind blew; the moonlight came and went; the clouds chased each other over the sky, some black and threatening, some with silver edges; and with thoughts as wild and changeable, but with a heaven full of stars over all, the young man wandered on.

Passing the shop, he noticed a man standing in the shadow of the gateway. Will stopped, confronted him, and, after looking at him intently a moment, called his name, —

"Mr. Emmons!"

The head clerk stepped out and joined him. "You may think it strange to see me here," he said, in a low, mysterious tone of voice. "To tell the truth, I was watching. I am very anxious."

"About what?" William asked.

"I know I can trust you; and perhaps you can give me some advice," Emmons replied, as they walked on together. "There's something wrong over there," — he pointed at the light in Daskill's counting-room, — "and I'd give something to know what it is."

"I heard Mr. Daskill was to leave town to-day," remarked William.

"He was; but he could n't get off. He is looking over his private papers there now. He's up to some new game; I'm trying to find out what. I thought that woman would be around. She's connected with it. But I haven't seen her."

"He continues to meet her?"

"Oh, yes! Only two nights ago," whispered the head clerk, "I—to tell the truth, I was anxious about things; I was on the watch, and I saw a woman in black pass around to the back of the store, and disappear. Daskill was there, and I felt sure he must have let her in by the back way. So I quietly placed myself behind a cask by the door, and waited to see her come out. It was a good while first; but they finally came out together. I heard more than I saw. 'Any time after to-morrow night,' Daskill said, in about the tone I am talking now. 'But don't be in a hurry. I must be well out of the way, you understand.' She said something I could n't catch; then she went one way and he the other."

"Did you see her face?"

"No, but I can swear it was the Chilgrove. 'There's something up. He has been preparing for it. He has increased the insurance on the Folly; it is now considerably more than the mortgage. At the same time, between you and me, he has got his most valuable things out of it—some that are both mortgaged and insured. And everybody is gone but him and the boy. When he comes back, he will board at the hotel; so he says. But he is sick of the place, sick of the business; and I think I have reason to be alarmed."

"I think so, too, if your well-being depends on him and his business," William said.

But he had no advice to give, and he and the head clerk parted on the next corner.

Returning not very long after in the direction of his uncle's house, Will saw, by a sudden burst of moonlight, a dark figure moving on before him. It paused a moment at Carolus's gate, then glided on. The moon was obscured again, and the figure was lost to sight. William wheeled about and walked back to the end of the street, returned, and met the figure near his uncle's gate.

"Mrs. Chilgrove?" She stopped and put aside her veil.

"I was wondering," he said, "who besides myself could be out so late."

"This is the only time I have ; I am a perfect slave in that house !" said the lady. "I have been out a few minutes, — the night is so wild ! — and now I must return to my jail."

"Does the jailer know his prisoner takes these midnight airings?" Will asked.

"I don't trouble myself about that. Whose business is it?" she demanded defiantly. "Can't a woman step out on the street after dark but somebody must spy out the fact and think evil of it?"

"If you mean me," said Will, good-naturedly, "I don't like to think evil of anybody. But when I hear of your taking these mysterious walks again, I can't help wondering whether it is the old intrigue or a new one."

"Intrigue, sir? If you allude to my acquaintance with Mr. Daskill, I suppose you know he has left town."

"On the contrary, I know he was in his counting-room an hour ago."

"In his counting-room? Adolphus Daskill?"

The lady was manifestly so surprised and incredulous that Will began to think he had suspected her wrongly.

"That's impossible," she added, after a moment's pause.

"Maybe," said Will. "For I did n't see him there; I only saw a light."

"He has broken up housekeeping, and his house is vacated; so I hear," she rejoined, in a more careless tone.

"Yes; everybody is gone but Mr. Daskill and his son."

"His son — he is not in the house to-night?"

She took a step towards him; her utterance was quick and low, and there was something startling in the glow of her feline eyes.

"I infer so; though I know nothing about it," said Will. "But you seem to know, and to be interested."

"Why not?" she replied. "I have a great affection for Clarence, and if he had been at the Folly to-night, I would have paid him a last visit. He is with Mrs. Downey, in Buffalo,—or should be, by this time. It must have been Mr. Emmons in the counting-room, if you saw a light there."

William did not think it best to speak of his interview with the head clerk, so he merely smiled in reply. He could not quite understand the lady, but felt sure she was moving in some dark scheme. She was evidently shy of him, and anxious to be gone.

"I can't afford to risk my reputation, talking with you so late at night!" she said, with a light laugh. "Good night!"

She hurried towards the house, while Will walked slowly homeward, pondering the problem.

For some reason, her hand, in lifting the latch, was not so steady as usual. The latch clicked. A shrill, cracked voice called out within,—

"Who's there?"

"Nobody but me, Mr. Carolus," she answered softly. "I thought I heard somebody around the house. Can't you sleep?"

There was no resisting the influence of those fond, persuasive accents. The old man answered gently,—

"I slept till I heard a noise. Nothing but the wind, I guess. Did you find your letter?"

"What letter?"

"One the store-boy brought around this afternoon when you had gone to the grocery. From Daskill's son, he said. I put it on the clock, and damned if I did n't forget all about it!"

"From Clarence!"

The lady's voice was no longer soft and sweet, and there was pallor and alarm in her face, as she hurriedly struck a light, seized the letter, and tore it open.

The superscription was indeed in the son's boyish hand, but the contents were Daskill's.

"I find it impossible to get off to-day. Clarence and I remain one night longer. I shall be at the store this evening. A. D."

She uttered a low cry and flew from the house.

In his astonishment, old Carolus got out of bed, found the lamp burning on the mantel-piece, the crumpled note on the floor, and the doors wide open. He was wondering what it all meant, when a shout from the street came in, and a man rushed by the house.

William Rayburn, on reaching home, had been attracted by a strange light up High Street. It flashed and flickered, then suddenly a window was filled with a red blaze.

It was he who gave the alarm as he ran. The Folly was on fire.

CHAPTER LII.

HOW ADOLPHUS WENT BACK TO MARIAN.

AT first only his own wild cry and the sound of his flying feet rose upon the night, as William sped through the village. Then sashes were thrown open, other voices took up the shout, other footsteps clattered on the sidewalks, fire bells rang, and the whole town seemed to awaken into tumult.

He thought himself the foremost, but, crossing the bridge, he was aware of some person hurrying on before him. It was a woman. There was no mistaking her. She was quite out of breath with running when he reached her side.

"You again, Mrs. Chilgrove!"

"Clarence is there!" she said in a hardly audible whisper, showing a white face under her veil. "Take this key—the back door!"

It was the latch-key that had been Marian's.

He had only paused to speak with her. As he was starting up High Street, a man rushing down Main Street joined him, and the two ran on together. Neither spoke until they had reached the front of the burning house. There the man bounded past him up the steps, between the two couchant lions, thrust a key into the latch and opened the door. The hall seemed all on fire; the staircase crackled and roared.

The man was about to rush in. William held him back.

"Mr. Daskill, you can't pass there."

"I must!" said Adolphus. "My son is in his room! the third story! I left him asleep!"

"Have you ladders?" cried William. "Try a window!"

The fire seemed to have started below; perhaps from a barrel of kerosene left running, or some other inflammable material in the cellar. It was rapidly working its way up through the house, and it was evident that the back stairs were in no better condition than the front. Adolphus shouted under the boy's window. Getting no reply, he darted away. William stayed only to shut the door and cut off the ingress of fresh air, then followed him to the barn. The carriage-room was opened and a ladder dragged out. Will ran his eye along it, then up the side of the house. It would hardly reach the second-story windows.

"Another ladder! — we can lash the two together," he said, in the hurry of the moment.

There were other ladders, but Mr. Daskill did not know where they were kept. No time was to be lost hunting for them. The single ladder was quickly raised. There were other men on the spot by this time; they held the foot while William mounted after Adolphus.

The attempt was made at a corner where the fire seemed to have made least headway. The ladder was placed at a side window of the room which had been Marian's bridal chamber. The blinds were closed; Adolphus wrenched them open, smashed glass and sash with a hatchet, and entered.

The fire had not yet penetrated the room, but it was filled with smoke, which now poured out in dense volumes; and hardly had William reached the top of the ladder, where he could look in, when a burst of flame came from the farther side.

Adolphus had found the door leading to the upper landing, and opened it. There he was met by a sight as appalling as that which had turned him back from the hall door. His way to the boy's chamber led up a stairway wrapped in flames. The heat and smoke and uproar were terrible; it seemed as if he must once more recoil. But he passed on, and disappeared.

The in-rushing wind cleared the smoke a little, and in the

awful moment that followed, Will had a dim glimpse of a white dove suspended over the white bridal bed. An instant later—he did not know how it happened—fire burst in, and dove and bed were enveloped in a sheet of flame. He heard a voice of agony calling for help, and, climbing into the room, amid the intense heat and stifling smoke, saw Mr. Daskill coming down the burning stairs with a burden in his arms.

“This way! this way!” Will shouted, for, at the foot of the flight, the man seemed to be blindly groping; he was even turning in the wrong direction.

“This way, this way, Mr. Daskill!” And, guided by the voice, the father staggered into the room, his face blackened, his hair and beard burnt short, but bearing his son wrapped from head to foot in a blanket.

“Help, for God’s sake!” said Adolphus. “I can’t see!”

Will took his burden from him and rushed to the window still gasping out, “This way! this way!”

He was himself blinded and choked. A voice he knew cheered him from without. It was Geordie Lorkins on the ladder. “Give him to me!” yelled Geordie.

Holding by the boy’s arms, Will lowered him over the sill, and followed, supporting him from above, while Geordie supported him below. At the same time he let the enveloping, blanket slip away from the boy’s face. Then he paused a moment, to secure his hold on the ladder, regain breath and sight, and call back once more to Adolphus groping at the window.

Suddenly the ladder received a violent jar, and Will, then on his way down, was nearly hurled from his position by something striking his shoulder. A dark body shot past him. He looked up; Adolphus had disappeared. He looked down; there, between the foot of the ladder and the house, lay a human shape. In his agony, and blindness, and failing strength, Mr. Daskill had missed his footing and fallen.

Clarence was not burned at all. He had, no doubt, been smothered in his room before the fire reached it, — perhaps before he was fully awake. He was laid on the green grass by the roadside, and his father was taken up and placed beside him.

“Mr. Daskill,” said Miles Fenway, bending over his son-in-law, “I fear you are badly hurt.”

“Is he — safe?” Adolphus articulated with difficulty, reviving a little.

“Safe from the fire — yes.”

“Alive?”

“I’m afraid not. He was probably dead when you found him.”

“That cursed woman!” groaned Adolphus.

At the same time a black female figure, closely veiled, hovering on the outskirts of the fire-lit crowd, turned and fled away in the darkness. Only one seemed to notice her, and he did not care to pursue her.

“What woman?” Miles inquired.

There was a long silence on the part of the fallen man, except that he breathed heavily at intervals, with faint groans. Suddenly he revived again, and whispered, —

“Is this Mr. Fenway?”

“Yes, Mr. Daskill,” said Miles, in tones of deep kindness and sympathy. “They are harnessing your horse. I will take you home to my house, where everything shall be done for you. The boys have gone for the doctors.”

Again Adolphus tried to speak. “Tell Marian —” But his words died away in a groan.

The horse was now brought. Tenderly the injured man was lifted and placed with his dead boy upon a mattress in the wagon. Mr. Fenway and Geordie Lorkins walked on each side, as it moved slowly down the road. The horse, of his own accord, turned up at the old familiar gate.

CHAPTER LIII.

WARD FARNELL'S PLAN, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

"THAT was the best built house in the whole country," said Ward Farnell, leaning against a fence, and viewing from a comfortable distance the melting away in flame and smoke of his once fine fabric. "And I believe Daskill burnt it up for the insurance."

"That ain't likely, with his own son in the house," said Mr. Emmons, who stood, pale and excited, watching the fire. "What do you think, William?" and the head clerk gave Will a significant look.

"I think," Will replied, "that Mr. Daskill has shown a devotion and a heroism which will go far to redeem his worst faults in most people's eyes."

"Well, they may think what they like," said Ward Farnell, filling his short pipe. "I have my opinion. The finest house, the best-planned house, William! I don't care where the other is. The way of the world, the way of the world. Riches have wings. Everything ends in smoke, more or less. Then we go—who knows where? Dust to dust, dust to dust, William." He struck a match on his trousers and lighted his pipe. "What is there in life worth living for, when you come to think about it?" he continued to moralize, as he and Will started down the road together.

"Very little," said William, "if we live from mean motives."

"Life ain't what it used to be, William. With all its modern improvements,—railroads, telegraphs, machinery, hot

and cold water all over the house, — the world has been making progress backwards, — did it ever occur to you? There ain't the heartiness in it there used to be; there ain't the real solid enjoyment."

"The lack may be in ourselves," Will suggested.

"I can remember," Ward Farnell went on, puffing his pipe, "when there was such a thing as society. There's no society now-days. There's what we call intercourse with our fellow-men, but there's no depth, no depth to it, William. I can remember when children were obedient and dutiful. Look at 'em now! Where's the veneration for the aged? The honor due to parents? Echo answers — Gone!"

"You can hardly say that, from your own experience of children, Mr. Farnell."

The old bankrupt grunted, puffed, and resumed, —

"Look at Daskill! flourishing like a green bay-tree an hour ago, and now where is he? Where'll we all be a hundred years from now? Ambition — what a foolish thing it is! A man struggles for fame, power, wealth, and what is the good of it all? There's only one object in life for a wise man. Do you know what it is?"

"I have my own idea of it," Will answered.

"It is the care of a man's constitution," said Ward Farnell. "And I believe, if I do say it, that I have the best constitution of any man in the country. No disease; I come of a long-lived race. I see no reason why I should n't live to be a hundred years old."

"The worthlessness of life you complain of seems to be a pretty good reason." And William, thinking of Julia, could have mentioned others.

Ward Farnell puffed his pipe with satisfaction, and went on.

"I'm going to try the experiment, just from curiosity, to see how long a man of good habits and sound constitution can preserve himself. You don't see me climbing ladders

and rushing into burning houses. I never trust myself on a steamboat or railroad train, — or in a carriage, for that matter. I don't take any risks, either on or behind a horse. I never sleep in any of their big 'leven-story hotels. I am scrupulous what I eat and drink. In short, I take care of myself. Ain't that good philosophy, William?"

William was moved to reply, —

"I think it is very bad philosophy."

"How so, how so, William?"

"Oh, don't you see! life would be worth infinitely more to you if you should live less for yourself and more for others?"

With an abrupt gesture, Ward Farnell took his pipe from his mouth.

"I don't know what you mean by that, Will Rayburn?"

"Well, for instance," Will replied, "I have been very much surprised to see you sometimes sit in your back yard, reading your paper or smoking your pipe, while you have permitted your daughters to wait upon you, work for you, even go to the well and bring you water, while you filled the way and obliged them to walk around you, when you might so much better have done such things for yourself and them. Pardon me for saying it, but I think you take altogether too much care of your own constitution and too little of theirs. You are a strong man, Mr. Farnell, and you forget that they are delicate girls. You may well ask what there is in life worth the living. What is a hundred years of such existence? When I cease to have any noble or unselfish aims, but contentedly settle down, a burden upon others, then, good Lord, deliver me!"

Will had long been wanting to say this; and now his pent-up feeling inspired the energy with which he spoke.

"In comparison with such living death," he went on, as the old man remained silent, "I respect and envy Mr. Daskill, on his mattress there, — much as I dislike him for many

things, — because there was one object beside himself which he lived for, and was willing to die for.”

Ward Farnell still kept a dogged silence. His pipe was out.

“I am sorry to wound your feelings,” said Will; “but, really, it is n’t I, it is the truth.”

Still no answer. Ward Farnell jogged on in sullen discontent. At his own door he returned a resentful grunt to the young man’s cordial good-night, and entered the house. Hortense called down the stairs to ask about the fire. Was it Mr. Daskill’s house?

“Yes!” answered the paternal voice, shortly. “Why don’t you go to bed?”

He found a lighted lamp waiting for him, but an empty water-pail and pitcher. As Ward Farnell, in his extraordinary solicitude for his constitution, always made it a point to water his whiskey, he was vexed at this negligence; and the girls could hear him grumbling that it would n’t have happened if Julia had done her duty and remained at home. These were the last words they ever heard from his lips.

They slept well after the excitement of a fire in the village, rose late on Sunday morning, dressed themselves leisurely, and went laughing down-stairs. Then they suddenly ceased to laugh. They found the lamp burnt out, the sugar-bowl uncovered beside it on the kitchen table, and a tumbler half full of whiskey, with a spoon in it, waiting for the customary dilution; the back door wide open and the old man outside, lying on his face at the foot of the steps, with his broken water-pitcher, the handle still in his hand. In starting for the well, Ward Farnell seemed to have met with one of those accidents which will sometimes happen to men of the most careful habits and the soundest constitutions.

The terrified screams of the girls alarmed their neighbors; and while Mrs. Rayburn stayed to help and console them,

William hastened to get a horse and drive over to Remus for Julia. This, then, was the business that brought him, and occasioned the untimely interruption of her interview with Mr. Rocknam.

William did not seem to see her companion, but advancing quickly towards her, with a look of earnest and anxious sympathy, took her hand and said, —

“I am sorry to come here with bad news.”

“My father?” she said, with sudden foreboding.

“Yes, I have come to take you home.”

“He is sick?” she asked, looking white and scared.

“He is dead,” replied William, with kind directness.

Mr. Rocknam now came forward, and, seeing how pale and agitated she was, wished to conduct her to a bench near by; but she held herself bravely up to hear William’s brief explanation.

“Mr. Daskill’s house was burned last night, and I walked home with your father from the fire. He spoke to the girls, and then, it seems, took a pitcher to get some water, and fell as he was going down the steps. His death, it will be some comfort for you to know, was probably instantaneous and painless.”

“Oh, if I had never left home!” said Julia. “No, thank you, Mr. Rocknam; I do not need anything. The greatest kindness you can show me now is to let me go with as little delay as possible.”

“Is yours a fast horse?” Mr. Rocknam asked William.

“Only moderately so,” Will admitted, foreseeing what was to come next.

“Then perhaps Miss Farnell will permit me to drive her over; my span is harnessed.”

Again she thanked him, but said, —

“I will go with Mr. Rayburn, since he has been so kind as to come for me. I shall want to talk with him about —”

In that reply Mr. Rocknam seemed to have received a blow. He fell back a little, while William stepped to her side (they were going towards the house), and said in a low tone, —

“Don’t lose a minute’s time out of courtesy to me. He can take you home much quicker than I can.”

“I have decided to go with you,” she said, and hurried into the house.

Mr. Rocknam rallied like the brave and generous man he was, and when she was ready to start, proposed to let William drive his team, and to send his coachman after them with William’s horse. This offer, too, she declined, and the fleet roadsters remained to bring home from church his motherless girls; while with a curiously sad and wistful gaze he stood and watched his fair guest ride away with her young neighbor. Ralph Rocknam felt that he would have given half his estate if the old man Farnell had chosen some less inopportune moment for that fatal step into the dark.

Alone with Julia, William gave her some details of the last night’s calamity. How strange that she should have known nothing of it, but that she should have had that talk with Mr. Rocknam in the garden while her father was lying dead in the house at home!

“I can never forgive myself!” she exclaimed, in an outburst of remorseful feeling. William blamed her for thus blaming herself. “How can I help it,” she said, “when I remember that almost my last talk with him was an unkind one?”

“Not unkind on *your* part, I am sure!” said William, with manly emotion. “The wonder has been that your kindness and patience should hold out so long. I know more of your trials than you think, and more of your heroic conduct, too. Now I can’t bear that you should be unjust to yourself.”

“But you don’t know how weak and fretful I had become.

O William ! I wish I could tell you all ; I wish I could confess, and get rid of this dreadful burden."

"You need not tell me anything. I know, I feel, all that you have suffered. No woman in the world could have borne up more courageously. Not a day or a night but I have seen you, in my mind's eye, Julia. You have been a shining light to me. When Miles Fenway was near breaking down under family troubles, I said what I never expected to say to him or to you, — I said, 'You among men, Mr. Fenway, and a certain woman I know, are to me a constant joy and satisfaction, though she does n't know it, and never will.' But you know it now."

Julia was overcome by the tenderest emotions of surprise and gratitude, and under all her agitation, a deep sense of blessedness swelled her heart.

"O William," she said, "I know how sincere you are, or I could not believe what you tell me ! I did n't suppose you ever thought of me in any way."

He turned and looked in her face, with an indefinably frank and ardent expression.

"I believe," said he, "there's nobody in the world I have thought of more."

"Except one, of course," she replied. "But why — if you have felt any friendship for me — why have you been so careful not to show it, when I have stood in such need of friendship ? I thought you very cold."

"Shall I tell you the truth ?" he said. "I am anything but cold. I have a great, hungry heart. I wanted to go to you for those French lessons, and — well, yes, I may as well say it now — for something better still, your sympathy, Julia Farnell. But something I heard made me think I'd better keep away."

"What did you hear ?"

"That you were to be married. Now, I was n't vain

enough to suppose that our coming together would endanger *your* peace of mind. But I had played a losing part in one affair, and I thought I'd better keep clear of another."

Julia could hardly trust herself to speak, such a tremor ran through her whole being. At length she said in a constrained voice, —

"I never dreamed of such a reason, William."

"But was n't it a good one?"

"Hardly, since it was based on a misapprehension. I was not engaged."

"Perhaps, then, there was all the more reason for my avoiding you. I felt certain of one thing, that if you did n't marry it would n't be the fault of a certain very worthy man. Was there danger of my preventing that good fortune from befalling you? I did n't know. But I thought I ought to keep aloof till the matter was decided."

"You really think it would have been good fortune for me?"

"Certainly, it seemed so. I like your Mr. Rocknam. He's as fine a specimen of a frank, honest gentleman as I ever saw. It cut him to the heart to see me bring you away; but how magnanimous he was! I think it would be an excellent match; always, of course, providing he is the man of your choice."

"But if — I do not love him — supremely?"

"Some of us love only our ideal supremely. The right person never comes. Shall we wait, then, and miss the happiness we might have, because we don't find the perfection we imagine? It's a serious question; one I should n't like to answer for another. But there is danger of our expecting too much; and we may let the honest substance slip, while we are groping for a shadow."

"William," said Julia, moved by a sudden and strong impulse, "I shall never marry Mr. Rocknam. If you had come

five minutes later, I might have given him a promise I should regret. Much as I respect and like him, it was — let me own to you how weak and wicked I am — it was chiefly because of my father that I listened to him. I was worn out and discouraged. Now everything is changed. I cannot feel thankful enough that you came in time.”

“And you will not regret?”

“I shall regret only the disappointment I know it will be to him. I can now live for my sisters and be happy.”

Then for a long while both were silent. They were riding past fragrant farms and peach and pear and apple orchards, amidst a Sunday quiet enhanced rather than broken by the songs of the finches and robins by the roadside, and the far-off drowsy crowing of cocks. Something holier than the peace and beauty of the May-time seemed to breathe about them; something sweeter than the scent of blossoms stole into their hearts.

CHAPTER LIV.

MRS. FENWAY COMES ROUND.

I REMEMBER well how, in later years, Mrs. Fenway used to talk about the last terrible crisis in the affairs of her family.

“At first I thought it a dreadfully strange freak on my husband’s part to bring Mr. Daskill home in that condition, — a man that had deceived and disappointed us, and broken my poor child’s heart. There had been a time, I confess, when I was anxious for a reconciliation ; but, now that the fine house was burned to the ground (and good riddance to it, for it had been the cause of all our troubles!), and Mr. Daskill had ruined himself as well as us (and, with his mutilated features, he could never be anything but a source of misery and distress to us if he lived), I must say, I wished we might never have beheld him again. But I saw afterwards that my husband was right about it. And when I came to myself a little, and saw Adolphus Daskill, who had wooed and won our dear Marian in this house,— yes, and stood up and defied and threatened us in it the very last time he was there, — when I saw him laid low, and suffering untold torments, all because of his devotion to that unhappy boy, my own feelings underwent a change. I gave up, and did’ all I could for him.

“As for Marian — oh, such a tender, forgiving, beautiful spirit as she showed, when she had got over the fear and horror of the thing a little, and found that the man who led her out of the house a happy and hopeful bride, and then wronged her so cruelly, had come back to her maimed and helpless, and needing all our sympathy and care ! She had been in a

low state of health ever since that awful night in the snow-storm. But the new excitement roused her. She overcame the natural repugnance she had to everything distressing, and showed a strength of character I did n't know she possessed. The sufferings she had gone through had developed some noble traits in her; and I believed she might then have done for Clarence, when it was too late, what she had not been able to do before. She had given up the idea that her own happiness was the main thing for her and everybody else to live for, — an idea which I had done more than anybody else to encourage, by my foolish indulgence.

"Mr. Daskill was perfectly conscious of his condition, and though he did n't say much, I believe he was sincerely grateful and contrite. He loved to have Marian sit by him; and once he said to her, 'I flung away my happiness! I flung away such love as yours!' Another time, after he had been a long while silent, asleep, as she supposed, he burst out with a groan, 'O God, Marian, if I had never let that fiend of a woman come between us! You don't know all, you don't know the worst! I have fallen into a pit of my own digging.'

"What the worst was, he never told. But I've no doubt it was something about the 'fiend of a woman,' as he called her, and the way the house was set on fire. It is generally believed she set it, with his connivance, though, by some mistake, at the wrong time. Though she was fishing for old Carolus's money, it was just like her to have other schemes a-hatching. What's more probable than that she intended to make what she could out of Carolus, help Mr. Daskill save what *he* could out of the wreck of his property, and finally go off and join him some place where they were not so well known? She was never seen after the night of the fire. Whether it was remorse that drove her away, or fear of detection, nobody knows, both, may be. There was evidence enough against her, and she must have known she had

caused the death of Mr. Daskill and Clarence. Nobody regretted her loss much, except old Carolus. He was dreadfully cut up by it. He had given her a good deal of money; and he raved and swore about that, and her leaving him in his old age. Some said she had coaxed him into an agreement to marry her, and that he had a will already drawn up giving all his property to his dear wife. Be that as it may, there is no doubt but the disappointment shortened his days; and there may have been a grain of truth in the gossip that went the rounds, about the old miser having his affections blighted at eighty and dying of a broken heart.

“ Mr. Daskill, of course, made no direct statement implicating Mrs. Chilgrove as the person who set the fire; he was not the kind of man to do that; neither was he a man to ask anybody's forgiveness for wrongs he had committed. Yet he won back a good deal of our respect by the way he bore his sufferings, and by his gentle and grateful behavior towards us all. He really talked and acted almost like a Christian. I thought one while this was the way Providence had designed to bring about a reconciliation between him and Marian, and I could n't but admit that, though fallen from his high estate, he would probably, if he had lived, have made her happier than he ever could have done if his pride and prosperity had remained. But it was not to be. On the seventh day after his accident, he bade Marian an affectionate farewell, and breathed his last. We had gone through a terrible experience with him, but I believe it was good for us all.”

In concluding her narrative, Mrs. Fenway was accustomed to wipe her eyes, and acknowledge that it was a great relief to the family when it was all over, and she and Marian and Mr. Fenway came back from Buffalo, where they had seen Adolphus laid in the Forest Lawn Cemetery by the side of his son. The lawsuits were dropped, and Marian was now free.

Old Carolus lived long enough to correct another error. If he had made a will in favor of Mrs. Chilgrove, he burned it, and dictated another in accordance with his nephew's advice. By that final instrument, he endowed a free public library in Waybrook, and left the residue of his property — still a handsome sum — “to a worthy person, namely, to that most deserving young man, William Rayburn,” greatly to the surprise of everybody, and of the said young man particularly.

“Having the most perfect confidence in my said nephew, William Rayburn, his honesty, sound judgment, and public spirit, I hereby appoint him sole trustee of the said bequest of forty thousand dollars, leaving the time and manner of the establishment of the said free library entirely to his discretion.”

It was, on the whole, a joyful surprise to William. The thought of the library which the town would owe to his uncle and him filled him with enthusiasm. As for himself, he did not object at all to the legacy. He had never undervalued money. It was only the mania for getting it in haste and spending it in folly which had moved him to make vows to poverty.

“This legacy is not absolutely mine, any more than the money left for the library is mine,” he said to his mother. “I have no right to squander a dollar of it. Some of it must go to do justice where my uncle did injustice. All of it is to be used wisely and charitably and generously.”

“I hope you'll remember that charity begins at home,” urged the widow.

“Yes, dear mother ; but it does not stop there.”

Village gossip knew what would of course happen, now that the poor boy was a rich man ; and those worthy friends of his, the Wintergreen sisters, begged to know of Lottie what her mother thought of the prospect.

"He might even buy the Folly, if it had n't been burnt down," says Miss Abby.

"And take Marian back into it," says Lizy Ann.

"And live happy with her all the rest of their born days," says Maria.

And the three pairs of spectacles and the eighteen auburn ringlets (more or less streaked with gray) glisten and quiver for the last time in this history.

As weeks went by, and William did not renew his attentions to the young widow, Mrs. Fenway, who had counted confidently upon that result, began to regard him as somehow guilty of false-hearted conduct towards her darling. Marian's health was extremely delicate, and it was feared that, unless something occurred to cheer her melancholy, she might pass into a decline. Sometimes a word or a smile from William, as they casually met, would seem to give her new life and happiness for a day or two. Then she would sink again into despondency. All this the mother observed, and heard meanwhile much talk about Will's good fortune, with praises of his modesty and good sense. It was more than she could bear. A tempest of sighs shook the fond maternal breast, and she poured out her feelings on the subject to Marian, — not for the first time.

"What is he thinking of? Is he puffed up with a little property? What right has any man to treat our Marian so?"

"O mother!" said Marian, "what right have *we* to expect any other treatment from him?"

"But you did expect it! You did hope he would come back to you!" Marian hid her face. "He shall!" Mrs. Fenway exclaimed, in a sort of frenzy, excited by her daughter's tears. "I will send for him. I will tell him, if he has any sense of honor or common humanity —"

"No, no, no! Don't for the world, mother! Especially

now that he is rich, and after the treatment he received from us when he was poor. Oh, how could I? But I did it, I did it!"

"No, you did n't. 'T was I that did it. I will tell him so. I will take all the blame on myself. And if he has any love or pity left in his heart —"

"Mother!" Marian again interrupted her, with anger and grief and shame; "you shall do nothing of the kind! If I had wealth, and he was still poor, it would be different. But as it is, I can die, mother, but I can never let you do that." So saying, she sank back on her lounge, and sobbed brokenheartedly.

"Well, well! poor dear child!" said Mrs. Fenway, dashing away some swift tears of her own; "it shall be as you say."

She secretly put on her things, and walked immediately over to the office, where she found the young man standing at his desk.

"How do you do, Mr. Rayburn?" she said, with a flushed face; "for I suppose I must *mister* you now you've come into a property, and seem to be forgetting your old friends."

"I was n't aware that I had changed in any respect towards my friends," William replied, offering her a chair.

"Thank you; I can't stop. Is Mr. Fenway about? No matter; don't go for him. I can hunt him up after I get my breath a little. I don't know but I will sit down a moment. I can't say you have really been changed by prosperity, William; I did n't mean that. What is a little property, more or less? You seem to take a sensible view of it; and Mr. Fenway says, instead of being elated by your good fortune, you seem to feel as if it had brought with it only greater labor and responsibility. He is so gratified that you still remain with him! The new co-operative arrangement works well; it is better for him and better for the men; and it is all owing

to you. Now, with your help and management, he says, the business can be enlarged to twice its present capacity."

And the little woman proceeded to fan her hot face with a newspaper.

"Yes," Will said; "I like the business; I like Mr. Fenway, and I have no notion of leaving him."

"But, of course, your private affairs and the establishment of the library will take a great deal of your time. I am so glad you are going to have a reading-room, where young people can spend their evenings. It will be a grand thing for this town; better than all the temperance lectures. Little did old Carolus think that the money he made selling rum was going to help cure people of rum drinking! What are these? Catalogues of other libraries! I see you are going to work in earnest. You will need a librarian, of course; and I've thought of just the person."

"Who is that?"

"Julia Farnell!" said the little woman triumphantly.

"Ah?" said William, with a curious, inquiring look.

"Yes!" said Mrs. Fenway positively, still fanning herself. "It is just the place for her, and she is just the person for the place. I hear she is n't going back into the seminary at the close of vacation; I suppose the work is too hard. But she will have to do something; and she showed such kindness to Marian in her trouble that I sincerely wish I could be the means of getting her more pleasant employment. Will you bear the matter in mind?"

Will smiled graciously.

"Thank you, if you will," continued Mrs. Fenway. "I see you are fitting up the old Farnell house. It is a real nice place, after all. What a pity Ward Farnell should ever have got too big for his boots, and so put his foot in that miserable Folly! O William, things would have been so different if he had stayed where he was! He might be alive now; though

I can't say the girls have met with a very great loss, for the matter of that. Was n't it strange, how his moral character all went to pieces just as soon as he lost his self-respect and the respect of the community, which seemed to have held him together? for all the world like an old barrel after the hoops have dropped off. He's a terrible burden lifted from that family. But I was thinking of the difference to some other people. O William! excuse a mother's feelings!"

Mrs. Fenway stopped fanning, and had recourse to her handkerchief. William leaned his elbow on the desk, and stood watching her with respectful interest.

"I suppose the girls would be glad enough to get back into the old house," — she put away her handkerchief and resumed the newspaper, — "if they could manage to pay the rent. Strange that it should never have been occupied since your uncle foreclosed the mortgage and turned the family out! Maybe you are fitting it up for yourself. But it will be large, won't it, for just you and your mother? I don't see but you'll have to do as everybody else does, — get married, William!"

And good Mrs. Fenway, still fanning herself, smirked and leered at him over the rustling newspaper. Will smiled graciously again, and thanked her for the suggestion.

"O William!" she went on, "I suppose I know who would have been your choice. And my poor dear Marian might have been happy. And I'm sure that it's no fault of hers that her destiny is different; for if ever there was a sincere and pure attachment — but of course it's too late to speak of it now. Only I hope you don't blame *her* for anything that occurred."

Mrs. Fenway heaved a prodigious sigh, and caught up her handkerchief. William stood looking down gravely at her, with a wrinkle of pain or annoyance in his brow, but made no reply.

"I'm willing to take all the blame on myself, though I know it can do no good now. But I wish you could let bygones be bygones, can't you, William?"

And she looked at him with red eyes, a persuasive smile puckering her convulsed face.

"Why, Mrs. Fenway," William replied, "I cherish no resentment towards either you or Marian, nothing but the most cordial good-will."

"Is that all?" she cried, now fairly drawn into the whirlpool of her excited feelings. "Have you no longer any love for our unhappy girl? Heaven forgive me for saying it against her wishes and commands, but she is pining for you; your coldness is breaking her heart,—and that is the very truth!"

Will looked his astonishment, his pain and commiseration, but said nothing.

"She charged me not to come to you, and I really did n't mean to say this, but see, I humble myself before you! I get down on my knees to you!"

And the poor woman looked as if she would actually have thrown herself at his feet, on the unswept office floor, if a glance had not shown her how very dusty and unfit a place it was for her purpose. Leaving her words, therefore, to stand, or rather bow down, metaphorically, she went on, still weeping,—

"I don't know where my pride is gone, that I should come to you in this way. But what is pride to a mother's love and grief? She is dying, William. You alone can save her. Oh! I wish you were a poor young man again, that you might see how sincere I am, and how little I am moved by any other consideration than a mother's regard for her daughter's happiness and life. 'T was I who took her from you, I who made that most miserable marriage. I did it in my vanity and ignorance. It has been an awful lesson, a dreadful judgment. Soften it to us, William! If you have no regard for me, I

know your friendship for her father. For his sake, promise that you will come and visit and cheer our child."

"I certainly will come!" said William, deeply moved.

"I knew you would. And oh, don't delay! Since she gave you up, she has been failing so fast! A week may be fatal. You would have come of your own accord some time, I know, but I could not, I dared not, wait. Bless you! bless you!" She seized his hand and kissed it. "All will yet be well!"

"I will come," Will repeated, with a strange embarrassment. "I will do all I can for you and her—for all of you; but I cannot believe that her life lies in my hands, or her happiness. I should be sorry to think that."

"Don't tell me," cried Mrs. Fenway, starting back and glaring upon him, "that your feeling toward her has changed!"

"Mrs. Fenway," he answered, shaken by a great emotion, "I must speak the truth."

"You don't love her? Then you never did! You have trifled with my child's affections. Oh, the fickleness, the falsehood, the perfidy of men!"

She turned from him with a violent gesture, and dashed away her tears. He tried to speak calmly, and mastered himself to say,—

"There *has* been a great change in me—I must declare it to you—since I was separated from Marian."

"Well, well!" she was on her feet now. She turned again to him appealingly. "There is a great change in her, too. She has been cured of all her girlish vanity. She is an angel of patience. Such gentleness and affection I never saw before. You will, I am sure, feel some love for her when you come to see her again."

"I have never ceased to feel love for her," said William. "But, whereas I was a boy, now I am a man. She had all the boy's first passion. But the man's heart, Mrs. Fenway,

— you, at least, shall know the truth, — the man's heart is another's. Perhaps you had better tell her that before I see her."

"Tell her that, and strike a dagger into her soul? Oh! oh! oh!" Mrs. Fenway sobbed hysterically. Again she turned from William with an angry gesture, when he would have calmed her. "But tell me who it is! What siren, what enchantress," — her anger changed to horrible sarcasm, — "what paragon of beauty and virtue has come in before my Marian?"

William hesitated, but concluded to speak plainly.

"She is no paragon, no enchantress, but a brave, good girl. One you know, and have just spoken of very kindly," he said, flushing up.

"Julia Farnell?" screamed the little woman. "Ward Farnell's daughter? Marian! Marian! Marian!" and she sank down again in the chair.

Still holding himself calm, Will said, —

"What I tell you is still a secret, but I thought it right to intrust it to you, and to Marian, if I am to see her."

"You can spare yourself the trouble!" Handkerchief once more, drying the tears that had been shed in vain. "Ward Farnell's daughter, indeed! Why could n't I have known that before, and spared myself this humiliation? My poor, forsaken, broken-hearted child! I can't tell her of this interview, but I shall take pains to let her know how we have been deceived in you. Good day, sir!"

With frigid courtesy and fiery eyes, she bustled out of the room. On reaching home, she made small effort to conceal her agitation from Marian; but she had a good excuse for it. She had just heard a piece of news, so absurd! William Rayburn and Julia Farnell were engaged!

Marian turned white. "It can't be, mother!"

"Positive!" said Mrs. Fenway, with a scornful toss. "But

don't look so scared! Don't mind it, my child: he is n't worth a thought. Julia Farnell, the old bankrupt's daughter, preferred before you! The idea!"

"She might well be preferred before me," said the poor girl, with a deathly look, pressing her hand on her heart. "How did you hear?"

"Hear? It is all over town!" said Mrs. Fenway shortly. A statement which, thanks to her, was only a few hours in advance of the truth. The news *was* all over town the next day, somewhat to the annoyance, I fear, of the parties most concerned.

"Has my little woman been here to talk with you about Marian?" Miles asked of William not long after. "I suspected as much. She's a precious fool. Sometimes I think I shall have to shut her up, or clap a bell on her, to keep track of her mischief. William," Miles went on, with eyes beginning to glisten and voice to tremble, "you know how I have always liked you, and how glad I should have been if you and Marian had made a match of it. But she chose differently, to my great grief. And now you have chosen differently, and I can only say, God prosper you! Julia Farnell is better fitted than any other girl I know to be your helpmeet in the work you have laid out for yourself. Marian was n't so well suited to you; and I don't believe she would have stayed long with you — or with us — even if —"

Mr. Fenway wrung the young man's hand, and left the painful words unfinished.

CHAPTER LV.

A LAST MEETING.

WILLIAM talked over the matter freely with Julia Farnell, and both were in deep distress of mind about Marian. At length, two or three weeks after his interview with the mother, they received a note from the daughter, addressed to them jointly, under cover to Julia.

"My dearest Friends, I wish to see you both. As I cannot go to you, will you come to me? Any afternoon, but soon.

"Marian."

It reminded Will of the little notes he used to receive from her in the old days. Ah! why that tremendous sigh? After a long silence, —

"Shall we go?" he asked.

"I think we must," said Julia. "And, William," — looking him earnestly in the face, — "if you have a shadow of regret, remember, you are free."

He knew well how capable she was of such self-sacrifice. He made no reply to her then. Presently he said, giving her back the note, —

"We will go to-morrow afternoon."

They went. At sight of them, Mrs. Fenway burst into tears. She was changed very much from the tempestuous-tempered little woman who called on Will so short a time before. Having prepared Marian to receive them, she took them to her and withdrew.

Marian partly rose from the lounge where she lay, and with a smile of welcome reached out both hands to her friends. Her face, though thin, and of almost waxen delicacy, had never beamed with more perfect loveliness.

"It is so good in you to come!" she said, still holding a hand of each as they seated themselves beside her. "I wanted to see you together. So it has happened, Will, what we once talked about? I am so glad for both of you!"

"I am glad you are glad, Marian!" said Will, with overflowing tenderness.

"I might have been selfish and sorry," she confessed, with a faint blush. "But I know now you were not for me, Will. Even in the happy, the sometimes happy days, when — when we were together, I had misgivings that I was not for you. And if I had kept you, I should have been — I know that, too, now — robbing dear Julia. I hope she is all to you that I — oh, a hundred times more than I could ever have been! Julia, tell me how much you love him."

"If I do," said Julia, with a tremulous smile, "I shall tell you more than I have ever yet told him."

"Oh, well, never mind; tell me!" said Marian coaxingly, with her exquisite charm of manner, which nobody could ever resist. "I want to hear it; there's a dear, good girl! How long have you loved him?"

"O child! child!" broke forth Julia, with a sob struggling somewhere behind her words, "will you make me confess a secret? And it will not give you pain?"

"It will be a sweet pain. Tell me how long, tell me all about it!" Marian pleaded fondly.

"Will, shut your ears!" said Julia. She covered her own face for a moment, then, with a rosy rapture in it, turned it, full-beaming, upon Marian. "I have loved him all my life — ever since I was a child, and he a boy in my father's store. He was bashful; he thought I was proud; he would hardly

look me in the face. And all the while my little girlish heart was melting with tenderness for him — full of yearning love!”

“Julia!” said Will, in extreme surprise, “is it the truth you are telling?”

“I am not speaking to you, sir! What you hear is at your peril. Marian, have I told you enough!”

“No, no!” said Marian. “I never dreamed of all this! I know, now, why you never encouraged any of the young men who gave you their attentions. You told me you respected him because he did not rush to throw himself at your feet; but you did not let me guess that you loved him already.”

“No; I would not own to myself that I did. But all the while something in my heart kept singing, ‘He shall give me his love some day!’ Then think what I must have felt when I found he had given it to you!

“O Julia, why did n’t I know? How cruel it was of me — only I *didn’t* know — to tell you what I did!”

“Marian, when you came to me, and acknowledged your feeling for him and his for you, and told me of your trifling quarrels, and then of your more serious differences, it was sometimes almost more than I could bear; I had to hold my heart hard. You were my friend, and I would not let you know that you had what I wished for more than for anything else in the world; I would n’t so shame my love and embitter yours.”

Marian was weeping softly. Julia went on, her glistening eyes fixed on a cross of pearls that hung from Marian’s neck. Will listened, greatly overcome.

“I was true to you both, and I thank Heaven that I was. I believed he loved you, Marian, as he could never love me, and I sincerely wished you both happy. Then you married Mr. Daskill, and I was disappointed that William did not come to the house any more. It had been a comfort to me when he

came only to talk about you. My life was very hard ; I had insupportable burdens ; but — I was going to say they are all taken from me now. I have but one sorrow. Marian ! if I could see you well and happy, then my life would be a perfect hymn of joy."

"Well I can never be," said Marian, with a sad smile ; "but don't think I am unhappy. I do not even wish for life. It is all as I would have it. I was never good enough nor strong enough to be your wife, Will. If you had married me, you could n't have had me with you very long. Do you remember, Julia, the line in Victor Hugo's drama which I read with you ?

' Souffrir,

Rêver, puis s'en aller, c'est le sort de la femme.'

It is the only thing in it which I remember. I had a vague misgiving that to 'suffer, dream, and pass away' was to be my lot. I had this pain here, William,"—she laid her hand on her left side,— "even before that dreadful night when you rescued me in the storm. After that it grew worse. I don't think anything could have restored me, —not even your love. I could never have been so unselfish as you were, Julia," she went on, looking with infinite fondness at them both. "If I had been in your place, I should have tried to win him, even from my dearest friend. Oh, I know I should ! But I give him to you gladly now. I could n't bear that anybody else— anybody less worthy—should have him. His love is very, very beautiful, is it not ? Now, I want to say one little word to you he must not hear."

So Will went alone out of the room, in a dream of unspeakable sadness. Did he love Marian still ? To her he had given the beautiful bloom of first affection. But another now had the heart's full-ripened fruit. It was enough. Yet his soul was filled with immortal pity and remembrance, if not with regret.

At the head of the stairs Mrs. Fenway met him, with wet eyes, and addressed him in incoherent whispers.

“It was so kind of you to come, after — I talked with you very foolishly the other day, I know. A mother’s feelings — you will consider — and forgive. I fear we must lose our darling, but it is not your fault, though, in my haste, I said — I don’t know what I said! You have acted honorably all along, and you have chosen a good wife. And though I hoped — Oh, dear! dear!”

William, himself powerfully affected, was trying to say something to comfort the poor woman, when Julia came out of Marian’s room.

Sadly and silently the young couple went away together. As they walked beneath the wayside elms, in the light of the September sunset, neither spoke of what was in both their thoughts. He did not know what had passed between her and Marian in those last moments; and neither then nor ever after did she breathe the secret. Only by her rapt and sorrowful countenance, and the spiritual light in her eyes, could he conjecture how sacred and how solemnly sweet and sad it must have been.

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